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hollywood catwalk

COSTUME AND TRANSFORMATION IN AMERICAN FILM

TAMAR JEFFERS McDONALD

'A much-needed addition to the growing body of literature around cinema, costume and consumption, this book adopts a new and radical approach by examining one particular story – that of transformation through dress – which has formed a staple of cinema since its inception. The author traces the reworkings of the theme from Méliès' very first refashioning of the fable to its most recent reincarnation in *The Devil Wears Prada*. This novel methodology means that the book can examine both the cinematic fortunes of the heroines and the extraordinary changes in the lives of their female audiences.

The book is entertaining and accessible while remaining entirely meticulous in its scholarship – a feat as impressive as the sartorial magic woven around its stars. It will be a seminal text for all scholars and students working within the areas of film and fashion while its lively and enjoyable style, and the Cinderella story itself, will surely attract a wider readership.'

– Pamela Church Gibson, Reader in Cultural and Historical Studies, London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London

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Exploring Costume and Transformation in American Film

Tamar Jeffers McDonald

I.B. TAURIS
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With love, for Paul – the best dressed man I know

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introduction

At first glance, *La Chrysalide et le Papillon d'Or* and *Date Movie* could not be more different. Varying not only in length, sound, colour, 105 years as well as industrial, historical and cultural references also divide them. The former was one of the short films of cinema pioneer Georges Méliès and was shown in France, and then across Europe and America, from 1901, but is only to be found now in film archives or rare collectors' box-set DVD.[1] The latter makes up part of a long-standing if loose series of parodic films which began with *Scary Movie* (2000), and was shown in multiplexes worldwide before transferring to home viewing on DVD. Yet despite their many differences, one key facet remains the same: the transformation story. Forming the central episode of the Méliès short and an early and key sequence in *Date Movie* (2006), the transformation scene links these two films across and despite the other chronological and cultural gaps which separate them.

A man transforms a caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly woman; a team of men work over a fat woman, whittling a slender-limbed individual from the giant bulk. Although separated by over a century, the two filmic scenes maintain the same basic premise: through male agency, an ugly or undesirable creature is turned into a beautiful woman. While *La Chrysalide* evokes Ali Baba and Mozart's *The Magic Flute* in its mise-en-scene, and *Date Movie* draws on MTV show *Pimp My Ride*, both scenes demonstrate how physical and sartorial transformation can change the appearance and the fortune of the unattractive original.

As film historians have noted (Kovacs, 1976; Bloom, 2000; Ezra, 2000; 2006), Méliès was a keen magician and developed his interest in film as an adjunct to the theatrical performance of magic tricks. *La Chrysalide* is similar to other short films in the film-maker's catalogue in referencing this interest in magic, and also makes use of feminine allure and the exotic. In

La Chrysalide this fascination with magic is evident in the stage business performed by the central male figure, played by Méliès himself. The scene, a woodland clearing or jungle glade, is established by the creation of backdrops painted with exotic plants and flowers and arranged direct to camera, as were so many of Méliès' films (Kovacs: 7), so that the viewer is positioned like a member of a theatre audience, looking towards the stage framed by a proscenium arch. Méliès, attired in what would appear to be an attempt at 'Arabian' robes (stripy turban, stripy robe, pantaloons and tights) emerges and produces a large white egg-shaped pod, the chrysalis of the title.

Tilting it towards the audience to prove that it is currently empty – just as a magician displays an empty top hat before conjuring the rabbit – Méliès then fixes the pod so that it hangs in the very centre of the stage. The magician discovers a flute and begins to mime playing it vigorously. A giant stripy caterpillar emerges from stage left and, evidently entranced by the music, makes its slow way over to the player, before rearing its head up slightly, presumably to speak into the magician's ear. Having heard the

La Chrysalide et le Papillon d'Or: The butterfly lady revealed

caterpillar, the magician kisses it benevolently, picks it up and places it in the pod. After a magicianly 'pass' over the chrysalis to work his magic, the conjuror reveals the transformation: a beautiful butterfly woman emerges, revealing her glorious wings and balancing for a moment with her foot on the man's hand. The butterfly then comes down to the stage and dances about. Appearing enamoured of the butterfly lady, the magician tries to catch her with a blanket. Eventually he manages to throw this over her head and it subdues the woman instantly. Two 'Arabian' handmaidens (attired in necklaces and harem pants) enter from stage left and remove the blanket, revealing the second transformation: the butterfly woman has gone, replaced by an 'Arabian' princess. The magician appears even more enraptured by the sight of this version of the woman and, pleading for her love, sinks to one knee before her. She however rejects his love by turning her back on him; he grabs at her veil and she angrily turns, puts her foot on his head and – changes him into a caterpillar! Having trumped his magic with her own, she then walks off stage right, followed by the two handmaidens. The stripy caterpillar remains centre stage as the film fades to black.

The story of this very short film has a neat and pleasing if bizarre circularity. The magician, seeing the caterpillar, wishes to trade up to a more glamorous companion and therefore transforms it into the butterfly lady. Finding her difficult to engage with, he then transforms her again into a human woman, albeit one with the hauteur and poise of a princess. She in turn then finds him lacking as a mate and punishes him for his hubris, by returning him to *her* original state. While we will see similar transformation stories enacted again and again in the films examined in this book, we will never see such a neat revenge repeated. This is perhaps because most frequently the transformation motif has been co-opted for the romantic comedy, where genre dictates that the film should end with the couple together, or the romantic melodrama where separation is possible but the urge to be united remains. The princess's rejection of her would-be lover at the end of the Méliès gives satisfying closure to the short film, but in the full-length narrative, as we will see, the woman is rarely allowed to decline the opportunities that arise for her after, and because of, her transformation.

In pursuing its version of the transformation motif, *Date Movie* provides some moments which are as bizarre and surreal as the Méliès

film. The film's heroine, Julia Jones (Alyson Hannigan) despairs of finding a man to love her; at the film's start the slender actor wears a latex fat suit to illustrate why she is rejected by men. She goes to see a 'date doctor' to help her. In a flurry of television references, the date doctor, Hitch (Tony Cox) finds a reality TV programme on which Julia can meet a man – *Extreme Bachelor, Desperate Edition*. Before she can apply however she has to be rendered 'beautiful'. At first Hitch seems as if he will preach about inner beauty when he tells Julia – 'You are beautiful' but he then changes tack and adds the damning syllable '*ish*'. Julia is fully aware of the magnitude of the difficulty:

> Julia: The only way I would get on that show is if you magically turned me into a princess…
>
> Hitch: (his face registering the dawning of a brilliant idea) Let's roll!

Date Movie's transformation sequence now begins. Rather than spoofing the makeover programme alluded to in the title of the reality show Julia wants to join, *Extreme Makeover*, which in each episode plucks a self-confessed unattractive nobody from obscurity and family, secretes them away for weeks of extensive diet, exercise and cosmetic surgery, before returning them, Cinderella-like, in a ballgown and limo, to a huge party of admiring family and friends for their 'big reveal', *Date Movie* chooses to mock a different type of makeover show: MTV's *Pimp My Ride*. This show plucks an unattractive *car* from obscurity and owner, secretes it away for extensive tuning and bodywork, before returning it for a similarly shocking reveal of the difference between 'before' and 'after'. Using tactics from *Pimp My Ride* rather than from *Extreme Makeover* to change Julia allows the film to produce several moments of surreal and gross-out humour while – perhaps despite itself – also permitting it to suggest the dehumanising effect of these TV makeovers on their subjects.

As Hitch and Julia arrive at a garage, mechanics are seen working on the bodies of vehicles; the logo on the back of their overalls clearly reads West Side Custom Shop, directly referencing the location of the original series of *Pimp My Ride*. As the crew go to work on Julia, each of their various techniques is visually paired with shots of its effect on the woman (varying from screams, to giggles, to embarrassed shrugs) and corresponding shots of Hitch shaking his head sadly at the amount of work Julia requires. For

example, when a mechanic approaches her with a whirring electric sander, and then tackles her clawed toes, Julia first screams as the sparks fly, but then giggles as if being tickled, while Hitch holds his nose at the smell of her feet. This pattern of action and paired reactions from Julia and from Hitch continues throughout the segment.

The transformation scene in *Date Movie* concludes with Julia, like a newly 'pimped' car, hidden under a tarpaulin ready for the 'big reveal'. In

Date Movie 1: 'Before'…

a manoeuvre reminiscent of the Méliès film, where the blanket over the butterfly woman is taken away to show the new 'princess' form, the tarp is removed to disclose the new Julia; the camera tracks up her body beginning at her feet and newly slender ankles, showing off her now-trim hips and torso, then sleekly coiffed hair and a face devoid of the extra chins leant by the fat-suit. Not only has Julia's body changed, however: significantly her costume has also. In the 'before' segment, Julia wore a long pink top over a

Date Movie 2: …and 'After' Julias

flowery skirt. 'After' Julia, by contrast, is dressed in classy black from head to shapely toe, in a close-fitting two-piece skirt suit, black tights and shoes. Her new image bespeaks sophistication, furthered by her French manicure and elaborately curled hair. Just as the caterpillar was rendered glorious as a butterfly, and the butterfly made desirable as a princess, Julia is transformed from a 'fat' girl in jolly but un-slimming pink to a thin one in glamorous black.

The bathetic humour operating within the transformation scene in *Date Movie* may well be there to signal the film-makers' awareness of the cliché status of this filmic trope, but also seriously taps into the anxiety of rejection which became a motif in the Méliès film. Both caterpillar and fat Julia have been rejected by men they desire: a physical change is deemed necessary in order to attract a mate. While it mocks other texts employing the transformation device, *Date Movie* preserves without questioning the idea, which we will see across a range of films which employ the cosmetic transformation, that the improved exterior will achieve two things: it will attract a man; and it will somehow reflect more 'truly' than the old unattractive exterior the 'real' person within. Julia's transformation has removed the negative 'ish' from her description and rendered her beautiful. She now looks like the 'princess' that will attract the prince she has always deserved.

In both the Méliès short and the feature-length spoof, then, the female's exterior is changed, rendering her desirable. This theme recurs frequently in Hollywood cinema, and its perennial use as a filmic topic prompts a series of questions: what is the assumed connection between the internal and external form? Is male agency always necessary to effect the transformation, or can the woman change by her own volition? Can the woman ever change the man? How do these transformations themselves transform as time passes and cultural assumptions about female beauty modify? And most pressingly, what do these images of change and transformation, of improvement and transcendence tell *us*, the viewers, about what we should be doing?

In order to investigate these questions, this book will examine a key but frequently overlooked aspect of film style: the costume. In both the Méliès short film and feature-length *Date Movie*, costume and the body it covers becomes the crucial element in the transformation scene,

exemplifying the 'before' and 'after' of the successful change. For the transformatory power of costume is such that Julia's metamorphosis can be read just in the alteration between her oversize pink floral outfit and the chic little black number which replaces it. Through changing her clothes in this way Julia's character changes from a shy clumsy spinster to an outgoing sexually liberated 'babe'. This alteration in sexual status and sexual agency is a recurrent theme that will be traced throughout this book's exploration of costume and transformation.

Following on from this introduction is a theoretical overview, and then a section which lays out in detail the motifs and tropes of the theme of sartorial transformation, tracing their longevity as recurrent elements within film. This is followed by case studies of individual films which show the effect of costume changes on the identity, personality and sexual status of their central characters. Throughout, the book attempts to situate its film examples in their historical and cultural contexts: thus the explorations of the transformations variously at work in the films explored relate the changes pressed upon the heroine to contemporary social and cultural assumptions and expectations about femininity, female agency and desire.

In the conclusion I finally reverse this preoccupation with the female and look briefly at a film which deals with the male sartorial transformation. Male metamorphoses have been very much neglected in the few critical works that have looked at transformations (see Ford and Mitchell, 2004); while not as prevalent as the woman's transformation in film, the symbolic costume change for the man can be found. In films as diverse as *Aggie Appleby, Maker of Men* (1933), *A Place in the Sun* (1951), *Lover Come Back* (1961), *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *Grease* (1978) and *Earth Girls are Easy* (1988), the male protagonist experiences a revolution in his wardrobe. Interestingly, however, in the men's cases, the transformations themselves are often played down, do not always feature the same recurrent tropes as found in the female transformations, and are often employed pejoratively by the narratives, as will be seen.

Noting that the male-centred alterations are found in a variety of films raises another important point about the transformation trope: its cross-generic nature. Although the female transformation is most often used in genres traditionally associated with female audiences, like the romantic comedy and the melodrama, the woman's sartorial revolution and its

internal changes can be found across a range of other genres, including the thriller, neo-noir and war film. The musical also employs the transformation trope, frequently as the occasion for a musical number, as in *Cover Girl* (1944), *Silk Stockings* (1957) and *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (1967). While the pleasures of the musical number – movement, music, emotion – are designed to beguile the viewer rather than to prompt analysis, these numbers frequently overtly expose the transformation's connections with identity, agency, sexuality and consumerism in ways which may be more easily *glossed-over* in more straightforward narrative segments.

As a final point of discussion in this introduction, I want to consider the title of this book: why 'Hollywood Catwalk'? I employ this term firstly because the films dealt with in this book are all from mainstream American cinema; secondly, I believe that the use of costume in the Hollywood films of self-transformation is so crucial that its significance goes beyond the characters and frequently becomes a message to the audience. This book is therefore called *Hollywood Catwalk* to reflect the way in which mainstream American cinema acts as a catwalk to audiences around the world, a staged event exhibiting for an audience appearances and behaviours we are exhorted to emulate.

This is not to suggest that the theme of transformation cannot be found in films made outside the States – amongst many others, *Princesse Tam Tam* (France, 1935), *Muriel's Wedding* (Australia, 1994), *The Full Monty* (UK, 1997) and *8 Femmes* (France/Italy, 2002) clearly demonstrate otherwise. But while the use of the Cinderella and Pygmalion stories may be common across cinema, there are recurrent motifs and tropes present in the American films which link them beyond their obvious subject matter and differentiate them from similar films from other places. If not the tale, then the means of its telling is different in Hollywood films; there seems to be a system of visuals, an aesthetic, which is employed when dealing with the transformation theme.

A cross-national example demonstrates this point: let's compare the transformations in *Nikita* (1990) and its 1993 American remake, *The Assassin/Point of No Return*. The story remains the same, since the Hollywood film fairly faithfully remakes the French original. A young woman Nikita/Maggie (Anne Parillaud/Bridget Fonda) is a drug addict apprehended in a violent robbery. She appears to be punished with the

death sentence for her part in the attack, but actually is passed to the secret service which trains her to become an assassin. The woman initially fights against this recruitment and her mentor Bob (Tcheky Karyo/Gabriel Byrne) but eventually is told further insubordination will result in execution. At this point she yields to the teaching of a nurturing older woman, Amande/Amanda (Jeanne Moreau/Anne Bancroft) and her transformation from malnourished, badly dressed, unattractive, and angry woman to a poised, chic, graceful and gracious one is achieved. Now humanised and attractive, she is released into the outside world under an assumed name to make a life for herself until needed as a contract killer.

What interests me here is the different treatment of the transformation. In the French original Nikita is introduced to her mentor Amande whose room, up a spiral staircase from the main headquarters of the training facility, is filled with shabby furniture, old books and a dressing table with theatre-style lights round the mirror. Amande tells Nikita that she must first learn to be a human before she can tackle the next, more tricky, stage of evolution, woman. After Bob has delivered the ultimatum from the bosses to conform or be killed, Nikita returns up the spiral stairs of her own volition. Handing her a lipstick, Amande urges Nikita to apply it with the following homily:

> Amande: Let your pleasure be your guide. Your pleasure as a woman. And don't forget there are two things which have no limit: femininity and the means of taking advantage of it.[2]

The image of Nikita hesitantly using the pale pink lipstick fades into another of her applying mascara in a more controlled and confident manner. Her eyes and cheeks are made up and her hair is noticeably styled in a much more chic and becoming fashion. Nikita now seems not resentful or confused about her female identity, as before, but enraptured by her own image. As the camera pulls back to show Nikita in her underwear at the dressing table, Amande bustles in, mildly berating her for being slow getting ready. A newly poised Nikita responds that 'waiting sharpens the appetite', as she continues to apply mascara to her eyelashes. Nikita has clearly embraced her feminine side, as Amande has instructed her. The scene changes, and Nikita is found at a PC terminal as Bob approaches her. He tells her, appreciatively, that she looks very beautiful. It is time for their

dinner. Bob puts on his overcoat: they are having 'dinner out', the first time she has been allowed into the outside world since her training began. 'Shall I go?' Nikita asks Amande. The older woman smiles and gives her black gloves and a black evening bag to complete her outfit. The couple leave the building and the film then moves to Nikita's first challenge as an assassin.

The American version of the transformation borrows many of the elements laid out here: the introduction to the experienced female teacher, the protagonist's initial lack of confidence in the lessons of beauty, the ultimatum that she must conform or die, and the decision this prompts, to seek the older woman's help in changing. The emphasis given these elements and the setting and camera work which highlight them, however, differ greatly in the American remake. The training sequence is much more protracted in the later version; Maggie is shown at first more resentful and angry than just confused, as Nikita was, about how overt feminisation can help her. Much more time is also devoted to showing Maggie learning the behaviour of a respectable middle-class woman as well as the appearance of one. The mise-en-scene varies too, as Amande's garret has been replaced by Amanda's opulent apartment, hung with tapestries and furnished with a grand piano and antiques. Again, the news that the bosses' patience and Maggie's time are nearly exhausted prompts the young woman to return to her mentor, but this time the request for help is made explicit. Sitting on the wide, metal staircase up to Amanda's quarters, Maggie waits for her and, on her return, asks desperately 'Will you help me?' Amanda agrees, telling Maggie to 'come upstairs … all you need is balance'. The camera shows Maggie's legs, bare of stockings and topped off with clumpy boots below a drab short-legged jumpsuit, begin to ascend the stairs. The music swells as the scene fades to black; the scene fades in again on the stairs, and the new Maggie descends. Just as her legs were the focus of the camera as she ascended, now as she comes down again they are the focus too: sleeker, swathed in black stockings, finished with black high-heeled shoes. As Maggie walks down the stairs she has her back to the camera: the viewer notes her newly elegant form, black halter-neck dress, and red, artfully styled hair. She is transformed, and not just in appearance; when Bob delivers the news that they are dining out, Maggie embraces Amanda for helping her achieve this success and kisses her on both cheeks, not with an excess of

warmth, more rather in the manner of a polite and grateful debutante signalling her pleasure with air kisses. Her manners have been perfected along with her new sleek exterior: formerly wild Maggie can now move amongst polite society without fear of embarrassing herself or her masters.

While, then, these two paired sequences deliver the same narrative information and advance the story to the same point, the visual methods they choose differ greatly. Nikita's change is encompassed through a superimposition, as she looks at herself in the mirror: this self-regard indicates that the alteration has been internal, that Nikita has embraced Amande's injunction to let her 'pleasure in being a woman' be her guide in preparing her appearance for external viewing. In the American remake, however, the transformation is accomplished and symbolised by movement: Maggie ascends the stairs as a badly dressed hoyden, but descends a graceful young debutante. As shall be seen, stairs are a very frequent staging place for actions of this kind in the Hollywood films which employ transformation as a motif: the sense of aspiration – wishing to better oneself, attain a higher status – maps easily onto the physical geography of the staircase. The descent of the stairs by the finished product, by contrast, does not carry the charge of lowering oneself, but takes on other connotations of the model, the princess, making a grand entry.

We can also compare the reactions of the two Bobs in the different scenes. In the French original Bob walks up to Nikita as she sits working at a computer. He delivers his compliment seeming sincere but calm. In the American version of the film, however, Maggie is enjoying the attentions of Amanda (and the audience) in her newly transformed state as Bob walks in. He seems astounded at the improvement in the young woman; the same line – 'You look beautiful' – is now delivered as an exclamation of amazement rather than a polite compliment. As we will see, within the Hollywood transformation, the success of the alteration is frequently judged by its effect on a man.

While the two film versions of the scene thus share certain factors, the American remake is also linked to other versions of the transformation scene within Hollywood cinema. There appears to be a visual grammar of such scenes, an aesthetic of transformation that film-makers find appropriate and satisfying to employ. These tropes will be examined in detail in the next section.

Returning to the use of the catwalk notion as an organising metaphor in this book, I see these films offering a runway down which beautiful people move wearing beautiful clothes – in order to sell. What is on sale is frequently not only the style of clothes but also their behaviour. Such films advance the idea of buying things – including movie tickets – to improve oneself. One young woman in the 1930s studied Joan Crawford: 'I watch every detail of how she's dressed, and her make-up, and also her hair' (Fischer, 2003: 114); but it is not only costume that is highlighted on the cinematic runway. Film has always been a place for audiences to see how to behave as well as to dress. The author of a prize-winning letter from a 1939 issue of *Silver Screen* testified that films were to her 'a finishing school in modes and manners' (Levin, 1970: 93). Ironically, Joan Crawford, herself a model for women's dress and deportment, confesses in *The Bride Wore Red* (1937) to a rich count that she has learnt her table manners from society women portrayed in the movies, a self-reflexive moment when the film comments on its own status both as artefact and as 'conduct guide'. As Deborah Robertson Hodges notes, conduct literature as a branch of journalism especially flourished in America from the beginning of the twentieth century; with the fluid social boundaries that immigration and mass travel permitted allowing much personal mobility, an individual could hope to transform herself into what she desired by assuming the right costumes and behavioural modes (1990). Conduct literature thus provided, whether through question and answer columns in the newspapers or whole books of etiquette, information and guidance on polite manners and demeanour. Hollywood films became a visual extension of this branch of literature, teaching audience members how to hold their cutlery, as well as how to stand, walk, dress, dance, flirt and kiss.

Noticeably the catwalk concept is useful not merely outside the narrative world, to describe what the film is doing, but within it, inside the diegesis also. As shall be considered more fully in the chapter on recurrent tropes, the catwalk/runway/model moment is used as the highlight of the transformation, and as confirming its occurrence. As seen in the American version of the Nikita story, where the stairs act as Maggie's runway, Hollywood transformations reward the woman for altering her appearance with a moment where she is praised and adored, held in close-up for both on-screen characters and audience. In both the Méliès short film and the

Date Movie sequence the transformed woman has a moment where she strikes a model-like pose for a moment and seems to bask in the ocular attention of the implied audience. Other catwalk moments present the woman in motion, as with *The Assassin*, often, as noted, on stairs, so that they can geographically re-enact their journey from the before to after.

Films thus act as the 'Hollywood catwalks' that we the audience sit and attentively watch, like customers attending a fashion show. We are watching not just the clothes but the attitude of the models wearing them and the appropriate moments for wearing this or that outfit, being sewn into the overall narratives. Just as so many Hollywood films have finished with the wedding, or the couple in a clinch as the promise of one to come, couture shows traditionally end with the wedding dress, the supposedly ultimate symbol of what a woman can transform herself into: a bride. Both the catwalk shows and Hollywood films are interested in fantasies of transcendence and transformation, as well as in selling the idea that purchasing power can assist us all to partake of the changes we desire.

section one:

| Costume and Film |

The importance of costume has been presumed to go beyond the purely functional to attain levels of symbolic resonance by both film theorists and by practitioners, the costume designers and couturiers who themselves create the clothes to be worn on screen. In her important recent works (2003; 2007), Deborah Nadoolman Landis, herself both a film-costume theorist and an Oscar-nominated costume designer, is the latest practitioner to remind film theory of what it has previously overlooked: that costume designers are fully aware of the significance of every aspect of a costume – its cut, colour, outline, fabric – and its potential for conjuring up a character, even before that costume is placed on the body of the actor. Edith Head summed up industry practice, both of her own time and as it still operates today, when she spoke of costumes which helped embody character facets and assist the narrative as 'story-telling wardrobes' (Turim, 1984: 8).[1] Film theorists have subsequently built on this notion, to show that serving the narrative is not always what the costumes of a film do; they can by contrast contradict the dominant narrative trajectory. With costume holding this much potential to support or undermine the characterisation and narrative of the film, it seems important to consider some of these theories before moving on to discuss what the radical on-screen changing of costume can signify. This section thus discusses some pieces of costume analysis I have found thought-provoking and fruitful, before briefly going on to explore the literary and cultural antecedents of the transformation texts.

'DESIGNING WOMEN'

Maureen Turim's piece, first published in *Wide Angle* in 1984, is one of the earliest, and one of the most useful, articles to discuss film costume. It discusses both particular films, especially *A Place in the Sun* (1951) and *Les Girls* (1957), and their particular and changing contexts. Turim's article provides a model for future costume analysis: it sets its historical context, discusses ideological and symbolic implications of the chosen outfit and relates all these to female viewers, purchasers both of film tickets and the real-world versions of the film frock.

Turim examines an influential dress design, adopted by Hollywood film designers and then by dress manufacturers: the Americanised version of the New Look, which she dubs the 'sweetheart line'. This design maintained its eminence as the fashion for everyday wear into the mid-50s and its dominance as the shape for bridal gowns for even longer. Turim stresses the sheer amount of fabric and foundation needed to create the look, and the implications which became accreted to it:

> The sweetheart line depended on bras that were molded to a point and often strapless, corsets or girdles, and crinolines, layered, ruffled slips made of stiffened organza and net that supported the bell-shaped skirts to their great width at the hemline…The 'princess', the 'true-woman', the 'debutante' and the 'bride' are all connotations born [sic] by this dress as it enveloped America's would-be sweethearts. These connotations were sewn into the style not only by the history of fashion but by the way Hollywood costume design seized upon the style, prolonging its life and positioned it in reinforcing narrative roles. (7)

The article goes on to discuss several of the films responsible for building up this dominant image of the sweetheart line as the fitting garb for 'America's would-be sweethearts'. Turim asserts the work of the sweetheart line was to clothe young women, to act as a liminal shape for the 'transition to womanhood and marriage' (8). She cites *Father of the Bride* (1950) as an example text, in which the bobby-soxer heroine, played by Elizabeth Taylor, is rendered by her wedding gown as a vision of 'nuptial splendor' (8).

Moving to consider the sweetheart line's ideological implications, Turim criticises use of the sweetheart dress worn by Elizabeth Taylor's

character, Angela, in *A Place in the Sun*. Turim finds that the film, based on Theodore Dreiser's novel, *An American Tragedy* (1925) is robbed of its source's critique of the destructive power of capitalism, due to the distracting beauty of the dresses. In the novel, the hero is torn between two women, rich Angela and poor Alice, desiring the rich one not for herself so much as for what her wealth can bring him. In the film, however, such is Elizabeth Taylor's loveliness, as set off by her Edith Head gowns, that Angela shifts from being an empty-headed rich girl into 'the proper sweetheart' (8), a beauty whose appearance in the hero's drab life seduces both him and the audience into wishing for a fairy-tale ending.

Turim finds that while real debutantes would be familiar with the New Look from high-fashion magazines, middle-class aspiring debs needed to look to the movies for the right clothes to confirm their rites of passage; although she does not underline this point, the idea of Hollywood cinema acting as a catwalk for viewers is inherent here. Thus films like *A Place in the Sun* served to authenticate the sweetheart dress as fitting attire for young would-be beauties; the article cites Head's proud comment that the dresses were so popular 'Someone at Paramount counted at a party 37 Elizabeth Taylors dancing!' (8).

Turim recounts that the sweetheart silhouette began to be varied by the mid-50s; an alternative outline, the slinkier tight skirt, also began to be seen in films. Significantly, Turim finds that this tighter skirt was first used to mark out 'sexual warriors and golddiggers' (9); by the late 50s the tighter skirt began to signify older women also, ones who had matured beyond the illusions of youthful innocence and had instead garnered some experience. In *Les Girls*, for example, flashbacks show the three friends in versions of the sweetheart line while later sequences show the older and wiser women in more severe tailored gowns. The association of youth with the sweetheart line now has more pejorative connotations, connoting inexperience and gaucherie.

As her final point, Turim considers the symbolic resonance behind the sweetheart outline and ponders reasons for the success of this particular shape: she concludes this was due to its power as an overt symbolic rendering of the female form. Firstly the outline, consisting of two heart shapes meeting at their thinnest points at the woman's waist, draped and highlighted the curves of the idealised female body; then the fabrics

themselves evoked the hidden female sexual zones through their emphasis on slippery tactile layers and folds. Turim finds the sweetheart dress not only came to stand for the female body during this protracted period; it then restricted its movement through the tightly cinched waist, its engulfing and protruding layers of fabric, symbolically ensuring the woman's inactivity. The dress enjoyed its widespread success, she therefore concludes, because it symbolically chimed with the version of femininity contemporary American society was keen to endorse – decorative, youthful and passive.

This article is significant not only for its intriguing findings but as a model for costume analysis. Interestingly, it holds the germs of ideas touched on by Turim but developed by other authors in different contexts. For example, the final consideration of the emblematic qualities of the sweetheart line are reminiscent of the work of Sue Harper (1987 and 1994) on the costumes worn by heroines in the Gainsborough pictures, British films roughly contemporary with those showing the sweetheart line. Harper suggests one of the reasons for the popular success of the Gainsborough films, such as *The Wicked Lady* (1945), was their accent on excess and female pleasure, encapsulated by the costumes. Harper posits female audience members in particular being able to read the Wicked Lady's costumes, with their suggestive loops and folds, and her hair with its vortex-like arrangement of curls, as evidence of 'vulval' symbolism operating within the film, perceiving that such symbolism privileged the importance of the female body and its pleasures (1987:182; see also 1994: 130).

Similarly, Turim's discussion of the recurrent figure of Elizabeth Taylor forecasts work that has been done more recently by Rachel Moseley on Audrey Hepburn (2003 and 2005) and by me on Doris Day (2005 and 2007), on the connection between star persona, costume and film. Turim suggests Taylor's dresses in *A Place in the Sun* evoke the youthful innocence and beauty of previous roles where her characters were without the ideological impact of Angela. Whether the similarity of Angela's dresses to those worn in other Taylor roles is intentional or not, their likeness underlines the persistence of the star's meanings at that time – of youthful beauty and budding womanhood – outside any criticism of her social class and the privileges it accords her. Taylor's casting in the 1951 film thus inevitably works against potential criticism of her character because of the positive associations of her star persona.

Finally, Turim's piece, by showing how costume in *A Place in the Sun* removes the ideological criticism inherent in the source novel, anticipates an important film costume concept brought to the fore by Jane Gaines in her influential 1990 chapter, 'Costume and Narrative: How Dress tells the Woman's Story'. This is the idea that costume has the potential to offer an oppositional discourse within a film, operating a distinct code against the dominant narrative trajectory. While Gaines uses the notion to discuss how costume can set up a distinct 'temporality' (204) out of synch with the main narrative, Turim asserts that the costume can go against more than just the timing and flow of the film to subvert its very purpose. Significantly, while Turim does not say that this subversion was a conscious one, it can be seen as inevitable that a Hollywood product would ameliorate the savagery of Dreiser's original attack on capitalism. As we will see in discussing the transformation scenes' relationship to consumerism, Hollywood has never been likely to condemn fashion or spending.

Turim's piece thus embodies some critical lessons for the film-costume analyst and points the way forward to several more. The chapter by Jane Gaines has similar links with evolving film-costume theory and has indeed been one of the foundational texts of this body of work.

'HOW DRESS TELLS THE WOMAN'S STORY'

This chapter is from the collection on costume and film which Jane Gaines edited with Charlotte Herzog, *Fabrications* (1990). While the introduction to the collection also usefully lays out points of theory and avenues of approach, it is Gaines' own chapter which has been especially influential for later authors. Gaines includes quotations from industry practitioners such as Helen Rose and Edith Head, as well as actors and directors, to lay out the general rules about costume operating within Hollywood films. She then offers a particular focus on melodrama, a genre that could, on occasion, buck these general rules. The chapter thus offers an account both of common practice in costume and more specific suggestions of how costume could be used on occasions when sartorial excess was permitted, as in *Letty Lynton* (1932) and *Dark Victory* (1939).

Gaines asserts that, from silent film onwards, three linked dominant tenets have been held (180–1): costume should be kept subservient to the narrative; it is used as shorthand for personality; and it is especially female characters that costume is used to typify: '… a woman's dress and demeanour, much more than a man's, indexes psychology; if costume represents interiority, it is she who is turned inside out on screen' (181).

While Gaines' assertion here complements the idea – which as will be seen permeates the transformation – that the woman changes/enhances her interiority through a revolution in wardrobe, closer examination of various texts clearly shows male characters also have their personalities indexed through their clothes; although my book concentrates on the transformed woman, its conclusion points the way towards further exploration of the male metamorphosis.

Gaines' melodrama section contains the most significant part of her argument about the potential of film costume. She chooses to discuss this genre in particular, she says, because it offers opportunities for the full expression of costume's possibilities; wardrobe need not always be subjugated to the needs of the narrative in melodrama, which traditionally employs symbolic mise-en-scene, allowing elements of design, such as costume, to carry extra levels of meaning (202).

Gaines confirms that melodrama, rather uniquely amongst Hollywood genres, can permit an escape from realism. She finds this escape employed in two areas, historical and economic, elaborating that the genre is comfortable allowing anachronistic details in costume, and not insisting that a character's economic restrictions be allowed to impact on her wardrobe's luxuriance. She also cites Thomas Elsaesser's influential article on melodrama, 'Tales of Sound and Fury…' (1987), agreeing that the emotions in melodrama overflow their narrative confines and find expression in the mise-en-scene, including costume. Like the Sirk films Elsaesser studies, she feels 'the woman's film' from the 1920s through 1950s also 'tends toward an aesthetic luxuriance which sometimes matches the emotional opulence. Like the passions in these films, the costuming is unrestrained and relatively indulgent' (204).

Here Gaines raises one of the most significant lines of her argument. She remarks that, while melodramas may permit 'aesthetic luxuriance' at variance with the strictly functional costuming in other film genres,

directors of melodramas had their own codes of conduct. For a big dramatic scene, the directors still did not want the audience distracted from events by an overly eye-catching outfit: 'in other words, the actress should be dressed down for the high emotional scenes and dressed up for the less significant moments' (204). This point seems very clearly to set out a process whereby 'big' narrative moments are accompanied by 'small' outfits, and vice versa. This is a contentious idea, but one which Gaines backs up in her subsequent paragraph, where she also mentions other ideas which have also become very significant to film-costume theory:

> In these superfluous scenes the heroines may do nothing more than answer the telephone or pen a note, but she carries out this mundane task in the most visually stunning and complex costume featured in the entire film. And here lies the danger. The costume plot organises an idiolect with its own motifs, variations, surprises, anticipations and resolutions, which unfold in a temporality which does not correspond with narrative developments, whose climaxes occur in alternation with key dramatic scenes, in the undramatic moments. (204)

This paragraph contains several ideas that have influenced subsequent film-costume theory: her 'big' moment and 'small' costume notion; the idea that costume can constitute a specific 'idiolect' of its own within the film; that this is organised regardless of, and sometimes in opposition to, the dominant narrative of the film; and that it contains its own patterns of interest and theme, just as the dominant narrative does, but completely different to these.

Another significant notion Gaines raises while mentioning this alternative temporality is that the vestural code can offer 'anticipations' at odds with the main narrative. This seems very significant and further contributes to the concept of the oppositional discourse. If the costume code suits itself, ambling through the film with its own projects and themes, then there is no reason why it should take notice of the main narrative's moments of suspense and conclusion. However, while Gaines suggests that the vestural code's alternative trajectory thus has its own 'motifs, variations, surprises, anticipations and resolutions' (205), she declares that these cannot actively work against the narrative: 'Costuming, however, cannot anticipate narrative developments so closely that it gives away the plot. The heroine cannot wear all-black before the tragedy' (205).

Despite this assertion, I think the type of alternative pathway through the film Gaines suggests, concentrating on costume rather than event, would be likely to contain different notions of suspense and conclusion, ones operating around what the heroine *wore*, rather than what she *did*. In the same way that the audience interested in the clothing would then wait breathlessly to see what the heroine wore to 'answer the telephone or pen a note', rather than what she was wearing for a big narrative occurrence, as Gaines advocates above, suspense around narrative developments would be likely to be abandoned as secondary to costume revelations.

Indeed, it is possible to see films with costume codes advancing symbolic wardrobes which actively dismantle or wrong-foot the carefully wrought suspenses of the dominant narrative. For example, in the career girl romance-drama, *The Best of Everything* (1959), the costumes clearly operate a code for its three female characters, constructed around Turim's dichotomy of the sweetheart line for the innocent girl versus the slinkier sheath outline for the 'sexual warrior' (Turim 1984: 9). The overt 'bad girl', Gregg (Suzy Parker) is dressed throughout the film in tight-fitting clingy dresses which advertise her sexual experience, just as innocent April (Diane Baker) has her virginal status confirmed by her tight-waisted, full skirted outfits. Seeming 'good girl' Caroline (Hope Lange), however, is revealed by the costume code to be just as experienced as Gregg since she too wears the sheath outline, albeit in more sober colours as befits her more rigorous grasp of reality. While the film, therefore, seeks to surprise the audience with its late-scene revelation of Caroline's post-virginal status ('Leave me alone, Eddy!' – 'That's not what you said that night in Cape Cod!'), the costume has been telling the acute visual reader the truth about the couple's relationship all along.[2]

Both Gaines and Harper have suggested the existence of such acute readers in the audience; both argue for the likelihood of female viewers going to the movies to see clothes, as well as stories and stars, whether with a view to adapting them for home sewing (Gaines & Herzog, 1991) or as a key to reading the film which celebrates rather than punishes the sexually active female protagonist (Harper, 1987).

Finally Gaines elaborates on her 'big moment, small costume' idea: having asserted that directors would insist on relatively plain gowns for intensely dramatic scenes, Gaines then suggests that such intense moments

did actually call for 'important' designs (204), particularly if the dramatic event occurred during a scene requiring evening wear. Gaines suggests a way out of this impasse, positing a distinction be made between 'textual extravagance' and 'design extravagance' (204). Textural extravagance can work with the scene, Gaines implies, because of the symbolic resonance of certain fabrics: 'For on the bodies of the female heroines, such fabrics as lamé, silk velvet, duchesse satin and chiffon, simulate skin and thus seem to render tangible an emotional hypersensitivity' (204).

She elaborates on this 'textural' code later: 'Richness of feeling deserves enriched texture, and velvet, wool jersey, chiffon, satin, bugle-beading, or sable are often used on the bodies of [the melodrama's] heroines' (207).

Gaines here sees the possibility of fabric offering a code of meaning which will enhance rather than detract from the main narrative's themes. My problem with this suggestion is that the means of judging the success of this fabric code seems rather subjective, and brings us back to the symbolic reading of costume as feeding into character which Gaines elsewhere in her article takes pains to eschew. She expands on the symbolic potential of silver lamé in her discussion of *Letty Lynton*, where she finds the eye-catching outfit made of this fabric, worn in a scene of high drama, aptly conveys the characteristics of the heroine wearing it:

> … the textural rigidity (heartlessness) of the silver lamé fabric, overwhelming even the design feature (the asymmetrical cut of the cape-like collar as well as the peplum) is a visual 'knockout' in its own way. While some directors might see such visual brilliance as undercutting the scene, to me it is one of a few cases in which the connotative charge in the one system is equal to that of the other. (206)

Discussing the appropriateness of the outfit for the scene in which Letty (Joan Crawford) poisons her lover in terms of its revelation of her character is not qualitatively different from noting that an ingénue wears chiffon or the vamp black satin, costume characterisations which Gaines has dismissed throughout her article as both tired typifications and as subjugating costume design to narrative exigencies. Perhaps Gaines can bear the weight of characterisation placed on the silver lamé gown because its design and textural 'extravagance' are in themselves eye-catching; however, this means that, against her own suggestion, in this film a big moment is not accompanied by a small outfit. While I see some problems

with the specific film used to exemplify Gaines' theories, the chapter as a whole provides some important concepts which have become foundational within film-costume analysis, and which will be used to regard the role of costume within the transformations which are the central focus of this book.

Further fruitful investigations of the impact of costume both to the films they are in and the lives of the viewers who watched them are found in works by Jackie Stacey, and Sarah Berry. Stacey's 1994 book, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* reports the findings of a survey the author undertook amongst a sample of around 300 British women; the questions asked were designed to invite the respondents, cinema goers in the 1940s and 50s, to discuss which American stars they particularly followed, identified with and emulated in their style of dress. This latter section naturally feeds most directly into my interests here; Stacey finds that her respondents derived enormous pleasure from identifying with various stars, at times stretching to emulation of their favourites' clothes, hairstyles and accessories. How ordinary women could transform themselves through imitating the looks – and, at times, the signature behavioural traits, like eye rolling (167) – obviously connects with the topic of this book. It would have been interesting to find out whether the women remembered which specific films they had particularly responded to and if the narratives of their favourites themselves contained stories about self-transformation.

Sarah Berry looks at the Hollywood stars of the 1930s in her book, *Screen Style: Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood* (2000). Berry, like Turim, returns her observations about costume within film to the specific historical and social contexts that surrounded their production and release. Berry looks at films which implicitly attempted to sell clothes and beauty products to the women in the audience through their narrative focus on fashion and self-improvement. The drive towards emulating one's favourite star examined by Stacey through its effects on the *audience*, is matched by Berry's exploration of the same impetus from the point of view of the endorsing *industry*. Berry notes the prevalence of motifs of self-improvement and the transcendence of class and social origins in 'shopgirl' films of the 1930s, finding the means to achieve the elevation is most often figured through costume. Very interestingly, Berry cites a comment

by film theorist Peter Wollen about the origins of Hollywood itself; he considers the fact that the moguls who originally founded the film studios almost entirely came themselves from various garment industries: 'It was only natural that they should want to associate the cinema with extravagant and spectacular clothes' (Wollen 1995: 14). Perhaps the ideas of improving one's social position and both achieving and embodying a new higher status through costume was thus stitched into the very fabric of the Hollywood story from the first; Berry points out also that 'the mythology of the "makeover" became synonymous with the Hollywood star's rise from obscurity to fame' (xviii). With both founding fathers and key players acutely aware of their own original mismatch between outer appearance and inner ambition, it is little wonder that the transformation story should achieve such potency within Hollywood.

While the topic of film costume as a whole may often be found by its investigators to be under-researched, the relatively small size of the extant body of work on the topic enables a swift review of its main tenets and means that parallels can be drawn across articles with comparative ease. I feel that the new turn towards historical embedding evinced by the more recent work links back to the strengths inherent in Maureen Turim's early piece on the potential for meaning of a particular costume design. I wish to follow her lead in situating, not a dress style, but a concept about changing styles, in specific historical periods, tracing both the ongoing development and persistence of tropes concerning self-metamorphosis through costume.

Armed, then, with the ideas from these articles this book will be aware of the potential for costume to: carry and provoke both meaning and emotion; set up a system of emblematic significance based around the curves and folds of the female body which opposes the usual idea of 'phallic symbolism'; and intersect with specific stars and the ways in which their own star personae develop over time. Attention will thus be paid not just to design but also to fabric as possible carrier of meaning and mood; this book will be quick to search for a costume narrative operating outside or against the dominant narrative trajectory; and to consider whether, contra-Gaines, the costume can indeed forecast future narrative events. In discussing the gowns and other items of clothing used as indicators of transformation we will thus not only be alert to the possibilities of

costume's character connotations, but to its potential for suggesting the radical changes to come in the transformation scenes.

ANTECEDENTS AND INFLUENCES

The blurb on the website for Channel 4's makeover programme, *Ten Years Younger* advertised the 8 July 2008 episode thus:

> This week … we have our very own fairytale. Jane S … is a real life Cinderella, but with two very *glamorous older sisters* instead. This plain Jane has boring bobbed brown hair, bottle bottom glasses and wears her 14 year old daughter's cast offs. It's going to take some *real magic* to scrub up this Cinders. With a few waves of the *mascara wand* and a little expert know how, our very own *Fairy Godmother Nicky* will soon have Jane ready for the ball.[3] (Emphasis in original)

Transformation television may be very prevalent right now but, as will be seen from this quotation, despite the currency of the up-to-the-minute fashions draped on the transformed woman, such programmes still reach back to much earlier folklore and fairy tales to evoke the magic of the exterior revolution. In filmic transformations, too, the Cinderella tale is referred to both openly and subtly. Thus despite the topicality of what Rachel Moseley has deemed the 'makeover takeover' of television (2000), many of these media texts root themselves in stories and myths with much older foundations.

This section of *Hollywood Catwalk* looks briefly at these influential mythical and folkloric antecedents, teasing out some of the less obvious points that connect with the transformation motif; it will then look at some of the other work that has been attempted on such films.

There seem to me two major archetypal sources for the transformation narrative: the myth of Pygmalion, which was first written down in the *Metamorphoses* of Roman poet Ovid (8 AD), and the Cinderella story, which, as fairy-tale authorities Iona and Peter Opie discovered, has been told in similar form worldwide for 'at least one thousand years' (1980: 15). The main significant difference between these narratives is the identity of the agent for change. In the Pygmalion story the man is the creator of a beautiful statue with whom he falls in love; while the goddess Venus

animates her, it is the man himself who has wrought the thing he desires. Throughout the various versions of Cinderella, by contrast, the heroine is aided by magic, whether through the good offices of a Fairy Godmother, as in the account made famous by Perrault in 1697, or the magic calf, fish or bird of other versions.

Looking at the range of transformation texts, it seems that only a few precisely follow the Cinderella story, while the remaining majority split into two. Of these, half adopt the Pygmalionesque option, having the male as the agent of change, but the other half show the woman herself deciding to transform. While she may need to beseech professional help – from hairstylists, shop assistants and the like – in achieving the transformation, it is her decision to alter her exterior. There does not seem to be a cognate myth for this version of the transformation narrative. While the Opies note Perrault's written version of the Cinderella story made the heroine more passive than other folk versions (154), none of the renderings of the story they mention have the heroine alter her external state by herself, independent of magical intervention. Yet films using transformations, for all that they evoke Cinderella on the surface, very frequently do give space to the woman's decision to metamorphose. Perhaps Hollywood cinema has created a new archetype, an autonomous woman who changes herself, electing, for whatever reasons the plot throws at her, to be her own combination of Pygmalion and Fairy Godmother.

While the passivity of Perrault's Cinderella irked the Opies, the inanimate compliance of Galatea in the Pygmalion myth inevitably far exceeds it. The tale as set down by Ovid concerns an artist, sickened by the vanities and vices of the live women around him, creating his ideal to provide himself with chaste and virtuous company; enamoured of his handiwork, he implores Venus, goddess of love, to give it life. When he returns home from offering prayers and sacrifices he finds his request granted, feeling the statue warming to life under his hand.

Victor Stoichita (2008) has researched the Pygmalion myth, tracing its influences from Roman Ovid to medieval literature and art,[4] into contemporary popular culture artefacts, including Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) and the Barbie doll (1959). In doing so he has amassed a wealth of visual material picturing various scenes from the story. He draws attention to the '… continuity in the animation strategies deployed by the artists of

the West' (201) in rendering the moment of transformation. Stoichita notes that early artists frequently elected to show a series of images, providing a 'before' and 'after' comparison, the statue inanimate in one, alive in the next: the transformation is accomplished unseen in the interstices between pictures. As will be seen, there is similar continuity in the filmic strategies for rendering the alterations, which frequently draw on this 'before' and 'after' idea and omit, as did the early artists, the 'during'.

Importantly also for our purposes here, we should note that Ovid makes Pygmalion's devotion to his art show itself through the offering of gifts including clothing; from being one of the ways in which the fond artist hopes to create the impression that his statue is alive, the symbolism of the gift of clothing becomes one of the major ways to create the new female herself. While many of the transformations in film seem inspired by the version of Pygmalion familiar from George Bernard Shaw's play[5] or its musical incarnation, *My Fair Lady* (1956), rather than Ovid's poem, the emphasis on the clothing of the heroine is much more emphasised in the Latin text. Shaw (1916) briefly describes the filthy clothing which his Galatea, Eliza Doolittle, is wearing when the audience first encounters her, but the emphasis on subsequent outfits which the filmed musical version advances is not in the play. Thus the moment when the heroine appears in a dazzling costume is an invention of the film: we owe the sight of Audrey Hepburn in the magnificent Beaton-designed gown at the Embassy Ball to the movie and its makers, rather than Shaw's intervention, since the playwright refers to Eliza's outfit only in a stage direction, and after the event.[6]

Similarly, the earlier transformation moment which seems to lie waiting at the centre of the stage text, when Eliza appears newly clean, and clothed in a costume which shows her lady-like potential, is not expanded; instead it is thrown away in a typically thoughtless order from the Professor to his housekeeper:

> Higgins: Take all her clothes off and burn them. Ring up Whiteley or somebody for new ones. Wrap her up in brown paper til they come. (Act II: 29)

The moment where the woman emerges newly glamorous, which we know from its frequent iteration in cinema, is not featured here at all.

Therefore the weight laid on the importance of costume to mark the featured moment of transcendence may come from the Cinderella story. Again and again, throughout the versions that the Opies found – occurring in different countries and at different periods – the varieties of the Cinderella narrative mention the magical granting of an outfit which compensates for the dirty rags the heroine wears in her kitchen-maid incarnation. Whether it is 'braw claes' (fine clothes) for Rashin Coatie to wear to church, a gold and silver dress for Aschenputtel to don to meet the prince, or a cloak of kingfisher feathers which the Chinese Yey-hsien puts on for the festival, the different Cinderella tales all stress the importance of the fabulous outfit (152–8).

What the Opies also point out most intriguingly, however, is that the garment allows a return to the heroine's real self rather than an elevation. The *dirty* version of Cinderella is the enchantment. As the folklorists explain in their account, fairy tales are rarely attempting to alter the status quo:

> In the most-loved fairy tales, it will be noticed, noble personages may be brought low by fairy enchantment or by human beastliness, but the low are seldom made noble. The established order is not stood on its head. Snow White and Sleeping Beauty are girls of royal birth. Cinderella was tested, and found worthy of her prince. The magic in the tales (if magic is what it was) lies in people and creatures being shown to be what they really are. (Opie: 14)

Importantly, the Opies highlight the fact that all the various stories grant Cinderella noble birth, as daughters of kings or aristocrats. She has a rightful place at court which an evil enchantment manages to obscure, forcing her into a humble and subservient position: '[Cinderella is] under enchantment not when she is in her beauteous state, for that is her natural condition, but when she is in her *kitchen state*' (15; emphasis in the original).

It is also important that the high-born man who will eventually marry the heroine and thus restore her proper class status must recognise her worth and fall in love with her while she is still in her lowly persona:

> The prince's admiration for her in her party dress is worthless. It is essential he plights himself to her while she is a kitchen maid, or the spell can never be broken… The transformation was not an actual

> transformation but a disenchantment, the breaking of a spell… we are aware that the person was always noble, that the magic has wrought no change in the person's soul, only in… her outward form. (17)

The significance of these points for our consideration of the transformation motif within film will become most apparent when we discuss the trope of the 'true self', with which those Hollywood films using the metamorphosis narrative seem obsessed. Such films constantly juggle the emphasis on the external transformation, trying to give it the focus of something new and exciting (often visually) while also suggesting simultaneously that the change is actually a *return to* an authentic self previously forgotten or unachieved (often narratively). Not only Cinderellas, but the transformation heroines, are shown, through their metamorphoses, 'to be what they really are'.

It is also interesting that although the Opies insist the prince must be able to see Cinderella's worth when she is in her lowly state, film transformations rarely follow this. The hero's act of viewing the woman once she is transformed is fore-grounded – it is as if, although he has interacted with her, he has not really seen her before: her metamorphosis changes her from invisible to visible. Since this is the only significant element of the tale that the movies all reject, we should ask why this should be. Both overt reworkings of the Cinderella tale, such as *Pretty Woman* (1990), and others which only borrow elements of the story, appropriating the seemingly magical reversal of fortunes, such as *Miss Pettigrew Lives For a Day* (2008), revolve around the moment of self-improvement: when, workday clothes cast aside, the 'princess' is revealed. As will be seen, the Hollywood transformations have an intimate relationship with consumerism, and their own reasons for not wanting to perpetuate stories in which one's inherent worth is evident even when one is in rags…

The Cinderella story has become perhaps the most obvious reference for the transformation that is both sartorial and status-enhancing; it can be found, as noted, in films, but also throughout the wider culture and as a metaphor within the film industry too. For example, the film *Pretty Woman* self-referentially provides its own epithet when one of the characters calls prostitute Vivian's rags-to-riches story that of 'Cinda-fuckin'-rella'. Various Hollywood stars, from Joan Crawford to Audrey Hepburn, have been

associated with the story through recurrent plot-lines in their vehicles as well as their own career trajectories. A 1959 text advising girl teens on everything from how to lose weight to gain a boyfriend, *McCall's Guide to Teen-Age Beauty and Glamour* (Keiffer), begins its introduction with a contradiction: the text tells us that 'No matter what it is we want… we have to work at getting it… No one else can do it for us…' while the picture at the top of the page shows a happily smiling woman with an older woman, smiling, floating in the air and wearing a witch's pointy hat. We can almost hear the *ting!* as her wand works its magic: since we have come in with the 'after', we cannot tell what it is that the kind lady has changed, but judging by the way the younger woman is smiling, she is very happy with what the spell has accomplished. While the text enjoins hard work to achieve ambitions, then, the illustration suggests that we too would be wise to find a Fairy Godmother, implying perhaps the book may fulfil this role.

Invoking the Cinderella myth as symbolically significant to the cinema as industry, theorist Jeanne Allen, in an article on 'The Film Viewer as Consumer' (1980), sets out a series of relations between film and commerce, illustrating the financial and symbolic links between 'film viewing and consumerism' (482). Allen attests the necessity of fostering such links was felt early on in the industry's history, so that from the 1920s onwards films supported and reinforced the necessity of consuming other goods, and vice versa. But Allen notes that it is not merely purchasable goods, but also a mode of behaviour, which films endorsed; she describes the film itself as a type of Fairy Godmother that could be used to transform its audiences. Just as viewers would be seeing what to buy and wear, they would also be seeing how to kiss and work, marry and obey. Fan material illustrated how audience members used the movies for etiquette tips; Allen feels that the influence was conscious, and consciously exploited, with industry professionals, reformers and government aware that film could be 'the means of transforming Cinderella into a suitable mate for a prince' (486).

Hollywood films were thus acting as shop windows not just for purchasable commodities but more intangible personal qualities also; however, different images had different potential to wield such influence. Allen notes that the female body very soon came to occupy a privileged place on screen; tacitly echoing Mulvey's influential ideas (1975) about the potential of the female star to halt the narrative through the power of her

iconic image, Allen suggests that such 'Ritualistic moments of narrative stasis' (488–489) were used to highlight not only the female figure and the star persona of the actor personifying her, but also the rich consumer goods that acted as her mise-en-scene.

Further, not only were the women on screen enshrined as emulatable icons of behaviour and appearance; the women members of the audience were also being especially targeted as more likely receptors of filmic messages. Mary Ann Doane, building on several points of Allen's article, argues (1987) that the female audience member was considered by advertisers the ultimate consumer from the beginning of the twentieth century (23) and that films were considered an excellent method of reaching and influencing her. Doane puts forward an outline of three specific types of product sold in the film: the figure of the female star; objects which receive more or less overt 'product placement', and the film itself.

Hollywood, Doane claims, excelled in producing a filmic product that would serve to promote all three at once: the genre known as the 'woman's picture' (27). In assessing and reviewing all these goods on show, Doane asserts, a different type of 'look' was called for; she posits the existence of a female 'consumer glance' (30) operating in Hollywood cinema:

> At the cinema, the consumer glance hovers over the surface of the image, isolating details which may be entirely peripheral in relation to the narrative. It is a fixating, obsessive gaze which wanders in and out of the narrative and has a more intimate relation with space – the space of rooms and of bodies – than with the temporal dimension. It is as though there were another text laid over the first…In this other text, the desire to possess displaces comprehension as the dominant form of reading. (30)

Doane credits the female viewer specifically with this 'consumer glance', granting her more interest in objects on screen than plot events. This attention which 'hovers' over the narrative, disregarding incidents which the story insists are important, in favour of dwelling on stars, bodies and objects, could easily be expected to be aware of the costumes also and, if not being interested necessarily in what they connote, at least be aware of how they make the star look, acting as desirable commodities themselves. This attention can thus be seen to link up with Harper's idea of a particularly female aptitude for reading the costume narrative in films

(1987 and 1994). It also ties in with Laura Mulvey's influential ideas about the 'male gaze' (1975) but Doane posits a more nebulous glance which homogenises film images by reducing everything to the category of 'things to buy'.

This consumer glance can also 'isolate' (30) specific items and details, dwelling on them to the exclusion of others. Doane links this isolation of particular details to the way women are taught by advertising materials to break their own bodies down into specific parts:

> Commodification presupposes that acutely self-conscious relation to the body which is attributed to femininity. The effective operation of the commodity system requires the breakdown of the body into parts – nails, hair, skin, breath – each one of which can constantly be improved through the purchase of a commodity… The ideological effect of commodity logic on a large scale is therefore the deflection of any dissatisfaction with one's life or any critique of the social system onto an intensified concern with a body which is in some way guaranteed to be at fault. (31)

Dissatisfaction with ourselves, as audience members, works to support the cinema infrastructure in two ways: it makes us want to consume the images of more perfect female stars on screen, and to attempt to emulate their perfection and improve ourselves through the consumption of purchasable products. The elements Doane says advertising urges us to improve, 'nails, hair, skin', are frequently emphasised in the makeover scenes of transformation movies. The concept of the transformation, of both the necessity for and the possibility of, self-improvement, is thus edited into films themselves through their visual arrangements of shots as well as their *thematic* handling of metamorphosis themes.

Furthermore, as Doane's final point makes clear, this attention to self-improvement suits the status quo because while we are worrying about our own failures and trying to alter them we are not thinking about the inequities of the societies of which we are members. Focusing attention on the woman's need to improve her image can distract her (and us) from wondering about and working on more social problems. If as a whole the Hollywood film industry supports transformations, then, it may well be both to ensure our dedication to shopping and to dwelling on the personal improvements we can make. Changing ourselves distracts us from any need to change society.

The transformation story can thus be seen holding a special place within Hollywood film; to a certain extent it could be posited as the Ur-text, the original story, since its internal theme complies so neatly and fully with its means of being made. The same look that criticises the self appreciates the beauty of other women and objects, while the stories off and on screen work to convince that the application of consumables to the body will improve it. While the Pygmalion myth may be influential within film transformations, the tale of Cinderella stands as a more ubiquitous touchstone for the particular motif the films all adopt – that of the transcendent power of costume to reveal the princess. While many of the films which employ the transformation theme do not directly evoke either Pygmalion or Cinderella, advancing instead a female character who decides to change her appearance for her own reasons and under her own impetus, the transformations themselves evoke resonances which return to the ideas centred in the two foundational stories; for example, the notion of the 'true self' which nestles uncomfortably at the heart of so many of these narratives owes much to the Cinderella narrative, and to the idea that the heroine's *authentic* state is that of glorious princess.

Although these metamorphosis films seem to me to be so widespread within Hollywood cinema, appearing in different genres, at various historical conjunctions and with diverse emphases, previous critical work on such films has been quite limited. Two examples need to be considered here; both reduce the more thematic concept of the transformation to the more surface level of the 'makeover' and, by reading these films as operating solely within a female market, do not pursue the idea of male transformations. Focusing on one sex alone has the effect of rendering those texts which are explicitly targeted at a female audience less significant than they actually are: homogenising all 'makeover movies' so that their address is female flattens out the differences between films which are actually dissimilar.

PREVIOUS WORK ON TRANSFORMATIONS

In their book-length study, *The Makeover in Movies* (2004), Elizabeth A. Ford and Deborah C. Mitchell posit that the makeover is such a popular

idea within mainstream American cinema it makes up a genre of its own. They too suggest that this genre harks back to the myth of Pygmalion and the story of Cinderella, then trace the lines of these two foundational narratives in a succession of more contemporary products, including *Shampoo* (1975), *Working Girl* (1988) and *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002). However, they assert that Hollywood woke up to the potential of the film transformation in the 1940s, and thus neglect years of film history.

For Ford and Mitchell, 1942's *Now Voyager* is the master text, and they devote their opening chapter to showing how this film lays out ground rules for the rest of the genre's products; they call it 'the first high-profile film with a physical makeover at its centre' (9). While the 'before' and 'after' signifiers they list (including heavy brows, dumpy figure and glasses) do appear in *Now Voyager*, they also feature in *Why Change Your Wife?*, Cecil B. DeMille's 1920 feature which details the metamorphosis of Beth Gordon (Gloria Swanson) from frumpy wife to passionate partner via costume and cosmetics. Thus, although *Now Voyager* clearly offers a number of the defining tropes found in such films, it is not a text which originates either the wider themes or the smaller visual tropes of the filmic transformation. Because they anoint *Now Voyager* 'the mother of Hollywood makeover movies' (19), the authors miss the prevalence of the metamorphosis theme in earlier decades of film.

The fascination with self-, and other-directed alterations was already firmly in place in the 1930s but gained special resonance in that decade when coupled with the star persona of Joan Crawford, as will be examined in the case study on *The Bride Wore Red* (1937). The actor's stardom was marketed as a form of fairy tale – 'Joan Crawford is a modern day Cinderella', her studio biography asserted (Barbas 2001: 125) – and vehicles for her were created which overtly evoked the story's trajectory, banking on the opportunity for a rags-to-riches story to afford plenty of occasions for costume display. Because Ford and Mitchell, then, dismiss the 1930s as a decade purely of screwball comedy, with films producing heroines who were, at the start of the movie 'already stunner[s]' (91), they overlook the prevalence of the costume change as indicator of profound internal changes, both in the 30s 'shopgirl' films and many earlier texts.

As the discussion of Méliès' *La Chrysalide* in the Introduction suggested, early films demonstrated their makers' obsession with the new

possibilities of the technology, and one of the main ways to display this was by turning an object or person into something else. It is interesting to note that Méliès himself made films using both Pygmalion and Cinderella as source texts; both found their way into his early works; his *Cinderella* (*Cendrillon*) of 1899 was at that point the longest and most complex film he had attempted. Méliès' American counterpart in film pioneering, Thomas Edison, also included titles such as *A Modern Cinderella* (1910) in his catalogue; the American Film Institute lists twenty American versions which present the story directly or drew inspiration from it before 1930 alone. Rather than springing into celluloid maturity in 1942, the film transformation thus has its antecedents in various genres and interests; it draws on the late nineteenth-century obsession with magic (Ezra, 2000); a filmic tradition of Cinderella films, and early twentieth-century ideas about self-improvement, as advised by the growing 'conduct literature' industry which became fully operational in America with the 1922 publication of Emily Post's *Etiquette*, which advised on and mandated social behaviour (including, significantly, the correct attire to *wear* for specific occasions).

Overall Ford and Mitchell's approach to their topic is exemplified by their choice of the word 'makeover'; this signifies the surface changes that a character can undergo, and their observations remain on the surface, noting that class and gender identity is involved with the translation of self that the makeover marks, but not pursuing their examinations further to consider why the impetus to improve oneself should be pushed at audience members, for over a century of Hollywood history. Ford and Mitchell seem fond of the films they write about, and perhaps their book hopes to defend them. While the authors end by declaring that there are both helpful and harmful examples of the metamorphosis film, their conclusion remains vague, however: 'At their best, these films can provide us with useful and important ways of thinking about ourselves, not just familiar forms and predictable outcomes…' (207).

Since the pair set out on their endeavour wanting to declare the 'makeover movie' a genre in its own right, the book's ending should feel able to valorise generic material without apologising, yet Ford and Mitchell here seem to distance themselves from the mass of transformations in film – ones built around 'familiar forms and predictable outcomes'. Surely what is interesting, however, is the very continued currency of these forms and

outcomes despite their well-worn status. The fact that these films find the same ways visually and thematically to tell the transformation story is to me what makes them fascinating, not discardable.

Suzanne Ferriss' chapter in her co-edited book on *Chick Flicks: Contemporary Women at the Movies* 2007, with Mallory Young, evinces a similar ambivalence to her topic of interest. Her chapter, 'Fashioning Femininity in the Makeover Flick', looks specifically at *Funny Face*, an independent film, *Party Girl* (1995), which reverses the usual trajectories of the transformation text, taking its heroine, as a tagline might declare, from fab to drab, and *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006). Ferriss makes one particular point which I want to consider and contest; she claims the underlying message of these films, and of the transformation trope in general, is that 'women do not need to change – at least physically' (43), asserting that the 'makeover makes nothing over: it is ultimately unnecessary since the protagonist never really needed to change physically, but only to recognise – and be recognised for – her true worth' (44).

I find this an intriguing premise – the idea that the 'makeover' actually is unnecessary – given the prevalence of the transformation theme in Hollywood cinema across a range of historical contexts, and the emphasis placed on the actual metamorphosis within such texts. I think Ferriss concludes the makeover is not really needed because she can see that the heroines of all the films she cites are already lovely, and indeed it is hard to fault the attractiveness of female stars Audrey Hepburn and Anne Hathaway.[7] However, it needs to be remembered that within the films' worlds the women are not valued for the way they look at the beginning. *Funny Face*'s Jo Stockton (Hepburn) is derided by a photographer and a magazine editor for her lack of style ('The hair, the hair – it's awful, it must come off!'). Similarly, within the diegesis of *The Devil Wears Prada*, it is understood that Andy Sachs is plump and dumpy, with none of the style and élan of the other *Runway* women. While the audience can see the glamour of the actors, the films promote a fantasy in which the characters they play do not possess this, pre-transformation.

In insisting that such heroines do not really change, Ferriss' chapter perhaps wants to indicate her awareness of the tension in films which adopt the transformation motif around the idea of the 'true self', as will be discussed more fully below. The significant thing for me about this idea,

however, is that it attempts to resolve anxieties but can never truly hold them in check, rendering those metamorphosis texts which employ it uneasy, fascinating in their discomfort in trying to reconcile opposing ideas.

Ferriss concludes that the parade of clothing and other consumables accompanying the filmed transformation is harmless since they do not seriously represent items the audience members might be able to buy; she denies that the films carry the tacit message that we too should seek to improve ourselves and our fortunes by overhauling our looks and wardrobe, suggesting this is instead 'the stuff of fantasy' (54). Perhaps in trying to reassure readers that makeover movies are not harmful, she under-emphasises the importance of the actual transformation within such films and overstates the ease with which their heroines can find 'recognition' at work and in relationships. Part of the way she implies this is through the particular films she chooses as her examples: she uses *Funny Face* as her instance of the older way of conducting such stories and picks newer examples which do not end in the traditional manner, with the woman's capitulation to the male. The history of the transformation, however, does not support this perfectibilist manifesto: looking at these texts from different periods does not indicate the rise of the self-determining heroine in recent years. This type of character, the woman who decides to change her appearance for her own reasons and on her own initiative is not a new one; as we shall see in the discussion of the various tropes used in the metamorphosis film, she is as likely to turn up in a 1927 film such as *It* as one from almost 70 years later. Just as we find seemingly feminist notions of self-determining agency and control in *It*, however, we can also find 'old-fashioned' female characters in much more recent films who allow themselves to be made over by a male figure, as with the heroine of *She's All That* (1999), and even Andy from *The Devil Wears Prada* relies on the assistance and skill of a male expert who moulds her to fit a desired image.

While Ferriss' examples seem superficially to suggest that the makeover genre is a harmless one both because the transformation is 'unnecessary' and because the woman herself is now more in control of her image change, the idea that such films are improving by abandoning their previous sexist ideas about the importance of women fitting pre-constituted ideas of regularised beauty needs to be contested. We are just as likely to find active and independently minded women in the earliest examples of the transformation

as the latest; what is interesting about the genre is not that its products are undergoing some notional 'improvement', themselves transforming so that their unpalatable factors disappear, but that they actually display such continuity across decades. The reasons to transform, and the methods of telling and showing the story of the transformation, have remained remarkably consistent within Hollywood film across time, across generic boundaries and regardless of how central the metamorphosis itself is to the whole narrative. Rather than revealing an ideological progression from a deluded past to a self-satisfied present and future, film transformations parade an intriguing continuity of theme, image and methodology, tropes which will now be examined more closely.

section two:

| Tropes |

INTRODUCTION

A trope is a familiar convention, an idea or visual image recurrent within narratives, whether literary or cinematic. A common thematic trope, for example, would be the pattern of the rise and fall of the mobster in the classic gangster film. We are familiar with the story arc which gives us the rookie criminal, acquaints us with his ambitions, shows us his increasingly serious crimes and reaches its high point at the middle of the film where he has attained the top position in his gang. From there on, it is all downhill; the gangster is betrayed from within or overpowered from without; he dies in a hail of bullets.

Within this recognisable thematic trope, the gangster film also frequently presents smaller visual tropes; Colin McArthur succinctly sets them out in his chapter on the iconography of such films (1972), noting the dark suits and fedoras, rainy streets and big cars as the visible signs of the genre. The gangster genre, interestingly, also has a sartorial trope it often employs: from early works like *Public Enemy* (1931) and *Scarface* (1932) to more recent films such as *GoodFellas* (1990), the rookie marks his achievements in gangsterdom by ordering new clothes Cagney's Tom Powers in *Public Enemy* underlines his own transformation, from wild boy to violent man, when he is fitted for a fancy suit.

A range of recurrent conventions can also be found operating across the various films that contain narratives of transformation. As we found with the comparison of the French and American versions of *Nikita*, Hollywood has found a way to tell the story of sartorial alteration to which it returns again and again: both the narrative of transformation itself, and the methods of showing the change and its effects, recur across films and genres. There seem to be eleven major repeated tropes that persist across such films; seven are thematic and four visual. The first four thematic tropes indicate the ways in which the transformation is achieved, how they are staged, while two concern more internal qualities of the change, and the remaining one importantly qualifies the transformation. The visual traits are recurrent iconographic methods for showing the alteration; these will all now be considered and exemplified in turn.

1) Visible Transformations – The 'Makeover' Scene

Somewhat surprisingly, given the focus of these films on external transformation, scenes showing the actual alteration of a character are rather rare. While the 'makeover' scene is the most obvious trope of the film transformation, then, it is paradoxically not one of the most common. When the transformation does permit the viewer to witness the work needed to render the 'ugly duckling' into the beautiful swan, it is often presented within a musical interlude, a fantasy space outside the normal narrative drives. Here costume can be allowed to halt the flow of the story, as Gaines (1991) warned over-elaborate designs threatened, and the viewer is actively encouraged to enjoy witnessing the suspension of the dominant trajectory in favour of shots of consumer goods cut to a catchy tune.

In *Clueless* (1995), for example, the heroine Cher (Alicia Silverstone) gives her new friend Tai (Brittany Murphy) a makeover in order to make her more popular. Cut to the up-tempo sounds of a poppy track, the scene shows Tai at first hesitantly but eventually joyously embracing the new her that Cher crafts with the aid of some hair colour, scissors, and loans from her own extensive wardrobe. Cher and her styling assistant, best friend Dionne (Stacey Dash) transform Tai from a lower-class young woman, who fits only with the déclassé slacker group at Cher's exclusive high school, to a yuppie princess like themselves. While the young woman is marked from

her first appearance by her non-designer trainers, baggy trousers and check shirt, Cher's borrowed clothes enable her to ascend to a higher social echelon within the school and eventually, if only temporarily, to rival the popularity of Cher herself.

In *The Princess Diaries* (2001), Mia Thermopolis (Anne Hathaway) is groomed in keeping with her newly recognised royal status when famous stylist Paolo (Larry Miller) renders her unruly curly hair sleek and straight, tames her eyebrows, provides mani- and pedicures, all to a funky beat. Similarly, the transformation of the heroine, Valerie, in *Earth Girls are Easy* (1988) is encompassed within the space of a full-scale musical number. Valerie has detected a lack of interest in her fiancé Bob and asks her boss at the Curl Up and Dye beauty salon, Candy, for advice. Candy confidently leads her into the public space of the salon and calls on the other customers and assistants to help: 'Come on everybody, we're doing a makeover!' She then sings the song, 'Brand New Girl', as Valerie is rendered less 'wholesome' and more sexualised. Her red-brown corkscrew curls are straightened and bleached and her brown eyes changed with blue contact lenses, so that Valerie seems to be a completely different, as well as a Brand New, Girl. Candy's idea is that if Bob is straying, Valerie should be the different girl with whom he dallies. A more overt sexuality is the ticket to increased popularity, for Valerie as well as for Tai, whose rather androgynous original look is discarded for a more feminine appearance.

A similar arc of transcendence from outcast to popular through the right outfitting can be found in the short 1935 Disney cartoon, *The Cookie Carnival*. This eight-minute fantasy whimsically presents a parade and beauty contest in Cookie Town. After a march-past by various kinds of humanised biscuits, we meet our hero, a hobo gingerbread man. He meets a gingerbread girl who is sobbing because she has nothing to wear to the parade. Like Cinderella, these sartorial woes are relieved by a Fairy God-(father) figure, as the gingerbread man takes pity on her plight and confirms that she will not only go to the party but be crowned Cookie Carnival Queen. He then transforms her, using tools in keeping with the cookie theme. First he turns her hair from drab brown to gleaming blonde with the aid of icing, artfully twirled into a long curl on one side. He replaces her plain dress with a gown made from blobs of frosting, over a petticoat made from a cupcake case, decorated with cookie sprinkles as jewels. The icing

sugar from a marshmallow acts as face powder while rouge and lipstick are supplied by more sprinkles; as the finishing touch, the new beauty is allowed to admire herself in the shiny mirrored surface of a lollipop.

We can note here that Tai, Mia, Valerie and the gingerbread girl all have helpers who effect the external transformation for them; not all of the films where we are shown the transformation scene rely on the benevolence of an outside agent, however. In *The Major and the Minor* (1942), the central character Susan Applegate (Ginger Rogers) creates an outfit which transforms her into a younger version of herself in order to travel half-price on a train. Realising that she cannot afford the fare home and seeing a nine-year-old girl being given half fare, Susan retreats to the ladies' room in the station and contrives a rejuvenating outfit. Wiping the makeup off her face, she rolls up the waistband of her skirt to make it shorter, swaps her heels for flats, makes stripy socks by cutting up a jumper, and finally emerges with her hair in plaits looking shy and gamine.

Similarly, in two Clara Bow vehicles, *It*, and *Hula* (both 1927), the central female herself again achieves the revision. In *It*, released in February 1927, Betty Lou Spence (Bow) works in a department store and is attracted to her boss Cyrus Waltham Jr (Antonio Moreno). Asked out by his friend Monty (William Austin), Betty Lou agrees if they can go to the Ritz, where she knows Cyrus is dining. Monty reluctantly agrees, and Betty Lou goes home to sort out her outfit. Viewing her wardrobe critically, the young woman decides that her best option is the plain black dress she wears to work. She then acts decisively to achieve her goal of a fashionable outfit: picking up the scissors, she cuts away at the dress while still inside it, cutting a deep V neckline and removing the sleeves, until it reveals itself (and her) as a more stylish and desirable item. The comparable scene from *Hula* (released August 1927) comments on the earlier film; here Bow's Hula Calhoun models an expensive dress for her beau. When he hints that he doesn't like it, she cheerfully tears handfuls of the fabric away until it reveals more of her. Again the accent is on suiting herself rather than the sanctity of any existing dress form; in Bow vehicles, the clothes exist to be modified to suit their wearer, rather than to confer on her a pre-determined image.

The 1994 Arnold Schwarzenegger vehicle, *True Lies*, contains a very similar scene in which the character played by Jamie Lee Curtis attempts

a remake, drastically altering her dress while wearing it to effect a similar change on herself. In this film, Helen Tasker (Curtis) does not know that her husband Harry (Schwarzenegger) is a government agent. Feeling alienated from her spouse, she is almost seduced by a lothario pretending, by coincidence, to be a government agent, one who is seeking to recruit her too to a similar post. Once her husband finds this out he decides to punish his wife by calling on her to perform an undercover job: he tells her to come to a smart hotel dressed in her sexiest outfit. Helen duly arrives but examines her reflection critically in a hotel mirror just before the rendezvous. She decides the dress she had chosen – black and formal – is too frumpy, and tears off the puffy sleeves, before rending several inches off the hemline. With the dress purged of its more bourgeois detailing, she feels ready to tackle her assignment. While the narrative shows Helen obviously being manipulated by her husband into thinking she must dress differently in order to become a Mata Hari, it yet allows her through her own agency to alter her appearance. This is a significant moment within the film as Helen has until now been marked by her passivity, as much as her frumpy overlong skirts and drab shapeless cardigans. Furthermore, tearing up the black dress to make it more overtly sexy reveals not only Helen's desire for a more exciting life and marriage, but also Curtis's trim star body. This marks another of the defining features of the filmic transformation when it employs a star as the central character needing to be changed: the return of the familiar star in her customary form to her audiences.

Just as Bette Davis is hidden beneath the padding and heavy eyebrows in 1942's *Now Voyager*, so Curtis, whose fame in the 1980s and 1990s was heavily predicated on exposure of her very wrought body, is hidden for the first part of the movie under shapeless, all-encompassing clothes which conceal her shape. In both films the viewer waits impatiently for the first sight of the star as her familiar self. This can set up an alternative trajectory to the dominant narrative one, creating a story interested in the changes in costume and body rather than plot developments; as explored in the previous chapter, the wardrobe choices in both films are allowed the potential of establishing an oppositional narrative running separately from the main one. One of the chief pleasures of the transformation thus consists in a dual act of concealing and revealing: the famous star is first hidden, swaddled in unbecoming outfits or heavy

body padding until the transformation scene reveals her in her more usual starry glamour.

Another recurrent trope is the reaction of men to the alterations. Their approval is the proof that the metamorphosis is complete and has been successful. Tai's metamorphosis in *Clueless* is met by male approval at school the next day; Valerie's straying boyfriend Bob is aroused by her new look, and the gingerbread girl is crowned queen of the Cookie Carnival by the ecstatic unanimous decision of a panel of male judges.

The transformation scene from *Moonstruck* (1987) similarly portrays the woman as becoming more attractive to men through her cosmetic alteration. Loretta (Cher) is a quiet, hard-working widow, affianced to Johnny Cammarini (Danny Aiello). When she meets his devil-may-care brother Ronny (Nic Cage) Loretta feels a new passion, both for him and life; after they have slept together once, she tells him she cannot see him again but he begs her to accompany him to the opera; after this one-time date he will leave her alone. Loretta agrees. Later she goes to the neighbourhood hairdressers (knowingly called the Cinderella Beauty Shop) and commands the attendant to 'Take out the grey'. Loretta is transformed in the salon from a respectable widow with greying hair in a bun to an attractive woman, her newly raven hair styled into a bouffant do, eyebrows trimmed and makeup warming her pale lips and eyelids. While she portrays this transformation to the women in the salon as being appropriate for going to the opera, Loretta is really remaking herself as a person interested in life. As she leaves the salon two men exclaim about her looks – 'Wow, look at that!' Loretta hears this and seems heartened, rather than annoyed, at being reduced to an objectified 'that'. While he had been attracted to her before this self-revisionist exercise, Ronny is also affected by her transformation, gasping in astonishment at her new look.

The success of Loretta's transformation can also be measured by the fact that it returns the star, Cher, to us in her familiar glamorous state. Like the masquerade of the female star in *Now Voyager* and *True Lies*, part of the appeal of *Moonstruck* is the suspense set up by the unorthodox appearance of the star. Loretta dresses in a modest and self-effacing manner, quite the reverse of the star playing her; while her opera dress does not emulate or evoke the frequently shocking outfit choices made by the star – for example, her infamous Bob Mackie outfits worn for successive Academy Award

ceremonies – the transformation sequence does restore the star's customary dark hair and carefully made-up face.

The films discussed above come from a variety of genres, indicating that the transformation theme and its concomitant tropes traverse generic boundaries. Other films which include the on-screen metamorphosis include the thriller, *The Long Kiss Goodnight* (1996), teen-pic *The Breakfast Club* (1985), historical drama *Marie Antoinette* (2006), superhero spoof *My Super Ex-Girlfriend* (2006) and war/action oddity, *G.I. Jane* (1997), as well as more obvious 'makeover movies', *Miss Congeniality* (2000) and *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* (2008). Each of these employs the occasion of the female's remaking, whether by herself or by others, in order to advance the action as well as providing an occasion for spectacle. *Marie Antoinette*, for example, uses the moment to show the Austrian princess being claimed by the French court; their ownership of her is enacted by their disposal of all her clothes and personal effects. While the stripping away of the layers of skirts and petticoats shows the princess at her most vulnerable, away from home, claimed by a foreign and seemingly hostile people who, as we know, will eventually go on to cause her death, the literal stripping of the actor playing the princess, Kirsten Dunst, displays her naked body also to the camera and viewer. The unwarranted shot of Dunst naked is included as an attempt to render the exigencies of history more interesting, more immediate, to a modern audience.

Both *The Long Kiss Goodnight* and *G.I. Jane* play with the audience's awareness of the star persona of their lead actors by a reversal of the trait, mentioned previously, of withholding the star in her familiar guise. Both films instead feature the on-screen alteration of the star from her familiar appearance to a different one, and in both this is achieved through cutting off the hair. The heroine of *The Long Kiss Goodnight* (Geena Davis) is a government agent; rendered amnesiac, she had settled in a small town, and made a life there for herself and her child. Her memory begins to return under pressure; finally an outbreak of violence against her awakens her former persona and she fully emerges, dismayed at the domestic, maternal woman she has become. To announce the return of her 'real' self, she cuts off and bleaches her hair, and begins to wear more assertively sexual clothing.

While Samantha/Charlie in *The Long Kiss Goodnight* displays different versions of femininity, based around a sexual/maternal dialectic

embodied through hairstyles, Jordan O'Neill (Demi Moore) in *G. I. Jane* similarly demonstrates dual, warring, views of the feminine, with her 'before' (long flowing) and 'after' (shaven) hair. Moore's on-screen shaving of her own head is narratively explained as confirming her commitment, as the lone woman Navy Seals recruit, to being treated solely as a soldier and not as a female one: it is a demand for equality. However, the visual spectacle of a top A-list star significantly and truly (no head double) altering her looks in such a radical way swamps the act as plot point and becomes instead a part of the publicity[1] and mythology of the film.

While the on-screen scene of transformation is, then, quite rare, those instances where the film does play it up choose to do so in order to highlight a range of issues – femininity, desirability, popularity – but are always aware of the spectacular nature of what they show. By contrast, the invisible transformation determinedly withholds the spectacle of the change being performed; more numerous than the shown metamorphosis, these concealed moments of alteration will now be discussed.

2) The Invisible Transformation

The invisible alteration is much more commonly found within Hollywood films. The process by which the changes are wrought is withheld here, so that the viewer is granted the 'before' and the 'after' with no intermediate 'during'. But why do films choose to deny viewers the pleasure of seeing the changes effected? Examining examples of the trope at work reveals there are various reasons for this decision.

Most frequently where the actual work required to render the woman altered is not seen, the transformation is withheld in order to create suspense or surprise, or indeed frequently both: the viewer is worked upon to wonder what the alteration will have achieved, and the moment of revelation is filmed in appropriately grand style. In the 1938 novel, *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day* by Winifred Watson, a dowdy out of work governess has her life totally transformed in the space of 24 hours; after a day of excitements, she finds herself about to be launched on the London night club scene in borrowed finery. Her two mentors, actress Miss LaFosse and beautician Miss DuBarry, prepare to make up

her face and dress up her body, but Miss Pettigrew herself elects an invisible transformation:

> Miss DuBarry sat her in front of the mirror.
>
> 'No', said Miss Pettigrew firmly, 'I think not. I'd rather see the final result: nothing spoiled by seeing the intermediate stages, thank you.' (Watson: 93)

Just as Miss Pettigrew here chooses to skip seeing the work necessary to turn her into 'A woman of fashion: poised, sophisticated, finished, fastidiously elegant' (98), a move which the 2007 film version of the book retains, so films which select the invisible transformation elide the labour to preserve the sense of mystery which might be dispelled if it were shown. The transformation can seem more magical if the work needed to accomplish it is kept, like the tricks behind a magician's legerdemain, out of sight. A similar instance of the transformative labour being withheld occurs in 1921's *Forbidden Fruit*, where the narrative renders the change in poor seamstress Mary (Agnes Ayres) even more magical since she does not have to spend money to attain the glamorous wardrobe which achieves her transformation. Tapping overtly into the story of Cinderella, *Forbidden Fruit* shows Mary being inveigled into masquerading as a wealthy young woman. The costumes necessary to this imposture are provided by her employer, Mrs Mallory, a society matron who needs to procure 'the prettiest girl in New York' to entice her husband's potential business partner into staying in town. Mary ironically therefore gets to don the gowns she usually alters and mends for other women; DeMille stresses the magnificence of the sumptuous gowns on loan to Mary by having them designed by famous Parisian couturier Paul Poiret.

The film can also be seen to be making rather subversive use of the Cinderella story, since Mary is a married woman rather than a maiden. Her husband is a gambler and petty thief, easily made jealous and not above hitting her when riled. The plot of the film happily arranges to have him killed off so that Mary can legitimately enjoy the benefits of her relationship with her 'prince', the wealthy young captain of industry she secures through her new glamorous appearance. The film not only echoes the Cinderella tale through its basic narrative structure; it also contains extensive fantasy sequences which directly enforce the parallel by showing Mary as Cinderella, both by her kitchen fire and, after her metamorphosis into a

dazzling princess, at the ball. These lengthy scenes are intercut into the main narrative, couched as the imaginings of Mary or her 'prince', and feature even more outlandish and sumptuous outfits and settings than the 'modern-day' scenes.

A film's generic allegiances can also dictate using the invisible transformation. In the thriller, *Final Analysis* (1992), two sisters are involved with a psychiatrist, one therapeutically, the other sexually, but both with an ulterior motive. When the woman who has slept with the psychiatrist then kills her husband while suffering a bout of 'pathological intoxication' and is put in prison, she is forcibly transformed out of her usual glamorous and sexy outfits into the institutional uniform of denim shirt and trousers. This levelling outfit, which renders all prisoners visibly similar, then enables the woman to escape by trading places with her sister. The film wryly makes use of the fact that one blonde woman is easily interchangeable with another, as Kim Basinger substitutes for Uma Thurman, and escapes confinement by simply changing her clothes. The transformation which allows this plot manoeuvre is not shown in order to create suspense and surprise for the viewer.

But the suspense/surprise combination need not be used as the hinge for narrative action; it can be evoked to involve the viewer more with the character. For example, in *Now Voyager*, the central character, Charlotte, all clumpy shoes and unkempt eyebrows, is taken off to recuperate from a nervous collapse to Cascades, the rest home of her medical adviser, Dr Jacquith. While there Charlotte is given a better diet and prompted to exercise, so that she already looks healthier when her sister in law visits her; her glasses are also abruptly broken by Dr Jacquith to prove to Charlotte that she does not need them, but has been hiding behind them for years. Significantly, she claims that she feels 'so undressed without them'. The glasses have become part of the old Charlotte's wardrobe and must be removed as part of the new Charlotte's transformation. Dr Jacquith states that 'It's good for you to feel that way', preparing the viewer for the more sexualised and sensuous outfits that Charlotte dons once her cure is underway.

While Charlotte seems improved at Cascades, she is still recognisably the same unhappy woman she was back in Boston at the home of her domineering mother. Jacquith mandates a cruise to establish her as a totally rejuvenated person, and it is here that the real transformation takes place.

Now Voyager 1: 'Before' the transformation which Charlotte needs

The scene, as noted before, restores the famous star Bette Davis to her public in her familiar form. Charlotte is on board the ship; the other passengers are waiting for her to come on a shore visit. Their waiting and suspense at meeting the enigmatic 'Miss Beauchamp', Charlotte's shipboard alias, are felt by the viewer too; Charlotte's entrance, and progress down the stairs of the ship to where the others await her, acts as her 'big reveal'. The arrival of the transformed Charlotte at the top of the gang plank evokes her original entrance in the film, when she slowly made her way down the stairs in her mother's house, the camera focusing on her thick ankles and heavy shoes. The work necessary to change Charlotte from her old unhappy self to her braver new persona, wary and fragile, but out in the world, is not elaborated beyond Jacquith's breaking of the glasses, and the interim scene where Charlotte seems healthier and more slender. The film employs suspense instead of showing scenes where the transformation is achieved.[2]

Now Voyager 2: 'After' – chic 'René Beauchamp' steps out

Grease (1978) similarly chooses to withhold the scene of Sandy (Olivia Newton-John) changing from good girl to bad. Danny (John Travolta) has been successful in a car race, and everyone is celebrating; only Sandy seems sad. Having quarrelled with Danny about their relationship, Sandy has watched the race from a distance. Frenchy (Didi Conn) who has worked in a beauty parlour, kindly comes over to her, and Sandy asks for her help. This, and her comment to herself, in the form of a sung soliloquy, prepares the viewer for her transformation; reprising the song sung mockingly about her earlier by the other girls, in which she is compared to Sandra Dee,[3] the 1950s starlet, Sandy bids farewell to her nice girl persona.

In the next scene, Danny appears having traded his T-Bird leather jacket for a letterman jacket (the exterior sign that he has tried to take one school subject seriously and has earned some credit in track running). The other T-Birds view this garment – softer, knitted and white – as a betrayal, but do not have long to worry – Danny's partial transformation is very short-lived. For just then the new Sandy arrives.

Sandy's before and after are so radically different that no 'during' is necessary; the point is to surprise both Danny and the viewer. Had the film elected to show Frenchy changing Sandy's hair, makeup and wardrobe, the mingled suspense and surprise of this moment would be lost. The enormity of the transformation is best revealed by having it sprung on the viewer rather than worked up to by degrees. Gone are Sandy's neat blonde bob, her wide-skirted pastel dresses, ankle socks and saddle shoes. In their place are a (very anachronistic, 1970s) curly perm, skin-tight black trousers, off the shoulder top and red high heels. Sandy has consciously changed her exterior appearance from a good girl to a vamp; while her behaviour shows that she has not yet changed her inner self, her readiness to look sexually experienced indicates to Danny that she is now willing to renegotiate about this, the major cause of conflict in their relationship.

Another reason that the work necessary to turn Sandy from a pure maiden into a raunchy-looking vamp is withheld is because this makes the transformation not only more of a surprise, but also more magical, more like a fantasy. Danny is discussing his own partial transformation with his fellow T-Birds when she arrives; he has just told them that he has 'lettered in track' to get the jacket, evoking the horrified response, 'Danny Zucko turned jock?!' Danny explains that though 'you guys mean a lot to me, it's

just that Sandy does too and I'm gonna do anything I can to get her, that's all'. As two of the gang stare at Danny in hurt bewilderment, the other looks away – and sees the transformed Sandy. The reverse shot that would reveal her is withheld, however, so that the audience views his startled face, then his slap on the shoulder of his friend, his startled look of surprise and so on, through the T-Birds ranks. Before we can see Danny observe the surprise, however, we are at last given, to accompanying wolf-whistles, the sight of Sandy's legs, now clad in skin tight black satin, striding through the crowd. At last we see Danny turn, see the woman, look her up and down and then recognise her: 'Sandy?!'

After the whole gang is reconciled and another dance number is encompassed, Sandy and Danny roll up in his car and proceed *to fly off into the sunset*, both clad in leather jackets. There seems to me no reason why a film which can end with this fantasy of eternal youth and freedom, signified by the bright blues skies, fluffy clouds and flying car, should not also be prepared to fantasise about the good girl magically turning bad rather than breaking up with the boy. Like Danny's avowal of his feelings for Sandy to his friends, the film wants the couple to be reinstated to attain a happy ending and is 'gonna do anything [it] can to get' them together. Transforming Sandy from prude to vixen without showing any intervening stages is then not only important for the surprise of the scene, it is entirely necessary in order to maintain this fragile bubble of fantasy, which might rupture if made to accommodate scenes of hair perming and ear piercing.

Grease: 'Bad girl' Sandy makes her appearance at Rydell High

Musical interludes were seen to be significant for the enactment of the visible transformation in the last section and are no less prominent in the trope of the unseen change. In *Madame Satan* (1930) and *Silk Stockings* (1957) the alteration in the central female is accompanied by or encompassed within a musical number.

Madam Satan features Angela Brooks (Kay Johnson) whose husband Bob (Reginald Denny) has been straying with singer Trixie (Lillian Roth). After meeting Trixie, Angela decides to fight to keep Bob. She goes, anonymous and masked, to the party on a dirigible that Bob's best friend is hosting, announcing herself as Madame Satan, and proceeding to vamp her own husband. While Angela's metamorphosis is not in terms of quality of clothing, as some others of the transformations considered here are, since as a rich woman she always wears furs, jewels and couture, the alteration is significant in terms of sexualisation. Like Sandy in *Grease*, Angela must fake being a 'bad girl', sexually knowing, in order to keep her man. Again like Sandy, the external transformation occurs before the internal experience the exterior seems to guarantee: *Grease*'s Sandy appears a sexually knowing temptress before being initiated by Danny. This external change before the internal one is necessary in order to allow the internal one: looking like a vamp is necessary if Sandy is to become one. While *Madam Satan* presents a married woman, rather than the virginal girl, as its central female, the film viewer is still encouraged to read Angela in maidenly terms: her frequent wearing of white, and modest demeanour, testify to a lack of sexual experience in her married life. As Sandy is contrasted with the Pink Ladies, especially sexually active Rizzo (Stockard Channing), Angela is contrasted with lively flirt Trixie. Dressing more like bad girls allows the good girl heroines to ensnare the men they desire and ensure they themselves become sexually knowing. In this way, the appearance of both women forecasts the way they will become and attracts the man who is the necessary tool of that becoming.

Again the work rendering mild Angela into wild Madam Satan is withheld for suspense and surprise; the audience is invited onto the dirigible first so that Madam Satan's grand entrance is staged for us, as well as the other party guests. We are then surprised to see how altered she is, both in appearance and demeanour. Adopting a faux French accent, Madam Satan has the courage to make a spectacular entrance, announce herself in song

and then insult Trixie and intrigue her husband, emboldened since the voice, mask, name and costume hide her real identity.

Silk Stockings is a remake of *Ninotchka* (1939) and retains its story: a dour Soviet officer is transformed into a happy romantic when she falls in love in Paris. In both films the external sign of her ideological alteration comes in the form of the acquisition of material goods. The 1930s heroine, played by Greta Garbo, appeared after her metamorphosis in a 'ridiculous' hat she had previously criticised for its uselessness. Romance makes her realise beauty is important too. The musical version, featuring Cyd Charisse in the Ninotchka role, opens up the scene into a much more elaborate dance number, where the woman retrieves her illicit new purchases from their various hiding places around her hotel room: earrings in the typewriter and a hat in a jar. Her shedding of her drab green army uniform and trying on of the new filmy, feminine and seductive stockings, shoes, slips, dresses, is reminiscent of a caterpillar shedding its chrysalis and becoming a glittering butterfly; falling in love has awakened her need to look and feel more feminine and her purchases enable her to do this, and to attract the man's approval for this alteration.

As noted, the usual transformation trajectory is one that connects sexual desirability with the appearance of sexual experience, and thus one which prompts the woman to become more overtly sexualised in her dress. The reverse route can occasionally be found, however; in *Pretty Woman*, *Little Shop of Horrors* (1986) and *The Last Seduction* (1994) the woman's transformation takes the form of toning down her usually overt sexuality.

When several different alterations occur to the woman's appearance and dress style, the incremental changes, the varying degrees of alteration from before to after, are registered in different scenes. In *My Fair Lady* (1964), for example, based as noted on the Pygmalion myth and thus on one of the foundational texts of the transformation theme, Eliza's dirty and multi-petticoated outfit which she wears when meeting Higgins is taken away by his maids and burnt once she lives in his house. Her subsequent outfits are all neat, clean and becoming, as is her hair, although none of them approach the glamour of the two (designed by Cecil Beaton) that she wears to Ascot and then to the final ball which wins Higgins his wager. While Rachel Moseley has written eruditely on the recurrence of the Cinderella myth in star Audrey Hepburn's film roles (2003), it should be

noted that the transformation in *My Fair Lady* is an incremental one, rather than a radical metamorphosis. Further instances of incremental change, and thus of multiple small transformations which are not shown, occur in *The Women* (1939) and *Mahogany* (1977). In the former (and its two remakes, *The Opposite Sex* (1956) and *The Women* (2008)), the frequently found character of the disappointed wife is found; Mary's husband, like Angela's in *Madam Satan*, has been having an affair. Over the course of the 1939 film Mary transforms from a relaxed and confident wife, suiting her leisure activities to those of her husband in checked shirts and corduroy skirts which evoke his hunting garb, to a more poised and autonomous woman with a wardrobe of outlandish evening dresses at her disposal and a perfect manicure of 'jungle red'. Tracy, the sometimes-eponymous heroine of *Mahogany*, is shown at various stages of her career as a model and designer; the film begins with the woman, elegant in a mahogany-coloured self-creation poised on the eve of her greatest success as a couture designer, as her Kabuki collection is hailed as a triumph. The film then steps back in time, and in levels of glamour, as it follows Tracy struggling to hold down a day job and take classes in fashion drawing at night. In these scenes, set in urban Chicago, Tracy's outfits are simple and plain, obviously inexpensive, day dresses. When she accepts the offer of a famous photographer to visit him in Rome and become his latest muse, however, her costumes begin to become more extreme in terms of design and colour. The changes are not a 'makeover'; the alterations that occur in Tracy's off-camera wardrobe and hairstyles occur gradually and incrementally, as those in her work outfits as a model alter radically and swiftly.

The films that use the invisible transformation trope do so, as has been seen, for a variety of reasons. Predominant amongst these is the evocation of suspense and the surprise when the change is finally revealed; in the films discussed above, the impact of the radical alteration would be lost if the work necessary to achieve it was shown in detail. Not showing the self-revision undergone by the women in these scenes also allows the change to seem more magical, more like a fantasy, although, by contrast, when the changes are shown to occur in increments, gradually, it can seem more like real-life modifications of personal style.

While the past two sections have dealt with films which choose to show, and to withhold, the moment which renders the female star

transformed, as has been seen, a third option is open to film-makers who decide to use the metamorphosis motif. In this, very popular, trope, a particular form of the labour required to change the woman – shopping – is dwelt on at length, as will now be considered.

3) The Shopping Sequence

The previous two sections noted that on-screen depiction of the transmutation is quite rare, and that films tend to prefer to make use of the surprise and suspense that can be generated by not revealing the actual work of change. By far the most numerous instances of the transformation trope, however, concern shopping, which is presented as a kind of transformation in itself. In the films discussed below, simply buying the outfit is enough to initiate its powers of alteration. Just purchasing the skimpy dress, the dizzyingly high heels, is enough, in films, to reap their benefits. Shopping *is* transformation, these film sequences tell us.

Again frequently achieved during a musical interlude or montage, the shopping sequence not only prepares the central character, and the viewer, for her metamorphosis by displaying the commodities she is purchasing to achieve it; shopping is the very labour necessary to accomplish it. In *Gold Diggers of 1935*, for example, a musical number with Ann Prentiss (Gloria Stuart) and Dick Curtis (Dick Powell) is the occasion for the woman's rather unbridled spending, using her mother's charge account. Although her mother, Matilda Prentiss, is a millionaire, Ann has been deprived of the nice things she feels herself entitled to – dresses, jewellery, fun and boys. In the film's early scenes she appears in a series of shapeless dresses which do not accentuate her slim body or her bust; with her plain hairstyle and no obvious makeup, she appears more like the rich Mrs Prentiss' assistant or companion than her heiress daughter. Even Ann's brother pleads with their mother to let the girl have some nicer clothes. Eventually Ann makes a bargain with her mother – in return for a promise to marry the rich idiot Matilda has picked out for her, Ann gets to 'have fun' for the summer. This fun largely consists of being allowed at last to buy and wear the wardrobe of her dreams; any thoughts of meeting men to have fun with are frustrated by the fact that Mrs Prentiss also provides Dick as a chaperone.

Dick at first resents having to be Ann's minder and objects in particular to going shopping with her. He tells her that if they were sweethearts he would have the right to comment on her clothing and could even serenade her while she made her choices. This brings the scene to its culmination in the song 'Going Shopping With You'. Dressed in one of her plain day dresses, Ann is allowed to acquire expensive lingerie, diamond jewellery, hats, shoes, gowns; she also gets herself a permanent wave in the beauty parlour, eventually transforming herself, in her new black evening gown and ostentatious accessories, into an icon of excess.

While Ann shops, Dick sings: this is the division of labour between them and allows him to keep up an ironic running commentary on all the expensive goods that she desires. His song also couches their imagined future relationship in terms of things to purchase, including a cottage, a mortgage, and baby blankets, after, of course, a wedding, which is again alluded to by the necessary purchase – 'On your fourth little finger/A ring's gonna linger'.

At the end of the scene, surrounded by boxes overflowing with expensive items, Dick sings 'Behold the finished product! Behold a dream come true!' Ann's transformation has been invisible, in that the viewer has not witnessed her perm, or her trying on of any of the clothes. Yet the shopping that has been illustrated acts as the moment of alteration; pointing to Ann, as she holds a pose elevated above him in an elaborate new dress with a large black fan, Dick indicates the modified woman amidst the agents of her change. It is not only Ann's dream that is embodied on the screen; the film here caters to its Depression-era audience's fantasies of riches and abundance, allowing its members to feel vicariously as if they had some share in Ann's bounty since they had been allowed to see it accumulate.

Although shop assistants, rather than a friend, act as the Fairy Godmothers helping to plan and achieve Ann's new look, the scene acts like the ones in *Clueless* and *Forbidden Fruit* to elevate the social status of the woman. Interestingly, in *Gold Diggers*, Ann has always been the daughter of a rich woman, but now in the appropriate clothes she finally appears one. It is easy to imagine Depression-era audiences revelling in the commodities on show here, and sympathising with dressed-as-poor-girl Ann's desires to acquire a range of exquisite items. In the shopping scene,

Gold Diggers of 1935: The culmination of Ann's spending spree

the film luxuriates in the opulent goods displayed for the camera and audience and allows a vicarious enjoyment of the spending spree.

Ann's increased social status, written on her body in the form of more elaborate and costly garments, is matched by her increased sexualisation. While her new clothes do not dramatically reveal her flesh, they do draw attention to her curves, and her new hairdo and use of makeup accentuate a more overt femininity. It is also noticeable that while Dick is pleasant to Ann before her transformation, it is only while escorting her about in her new finery that he falls in love with her and they become a couple. Her plain hairstyle and lack of makeup or accessories in the 'before' part of the film, contrast with her later construction as a society beauty through the acquisition of commodities.

While the shopping sequence can stand in for the transformation, visible or invisible, when a metamorphosis scene is provided, it removes the necessity for a lengthy scene of acquisition. In *Moonstruck*, for example, having shown the beauty professionals at work altering Loretta's hair, the film seems not to feel it also needs a shopping montage. The woman walks

past a store and sees a strapless red dress; she is shown entering the shop and then leaving again with several carrier bags. Arriving home, she unpacks and then revels in her purchases. This is where the focus of the scene is then found: Loretta pours herself a glass of red wine and sits by the fire in her bedroom examining her purchases: lipstick, scarlet shoes, dress, wrap. With soft music in the background, when Loretta begins to unbutton her blouse the scene takes on even more the feel of a seduction, especially when the sexy saxophone begins as she takes off her top. But the one being seduced is Loretta herself; she examines herself wearing her new shoes and wrap, studying herself as though seeing a new woman. The scene's autoerotic tone is meant to convey Loretta's long-dormant sexuality and sensuality returning to life, but also displays the easy association of the woman with the products she has purchased. Loretta has turned herself into a wow-worthy 'that' by having her hair done; buying expensive new, more sexualised, clothes achieve the transformation, as the reaction, not merely of bystanders, but the new significant man in her life, Ronny, attests.

The importance of music during the transformations was noted in both earlier sections, and indeed the musical interlude is also linked with the shopping montage, as seen in this moment from *Moonstruck*, the musical number in *Gold Diggers*, and the comparable one in *Enchanted* (2007), in which princess Giselle (Amy Adams), newly arrived in New York City, is joyfully taken on a shopping spree by a little girl armed with her father's emergency-use credit card, an item the little girl declares knowingly is 'something better than a fairy godmother'. The use of music confirms the connection of the invisible transformation with the magical or fantastic, as discussed in *Grease*; since shopping is shown instead of (and as) the work of transformation, it is unsurprising to find the musical sequence occupying such a prominent and important position in shopping segments too.

It is noticeable that in these shopping scene transformations, the trajectory has been from the sexual innocent to a more poised and seemingly experienced incarnation of the woman. An earlier film which deals with the same issues and reproduces the same magical transformation through the adoption of different clothing is Cecil B. DeMille's *Why Change Your Wife?* (1920). The heroine, Beth (Gloria Swanson) is a prudish matron who refuses to celebrate the physical side of her marriage, and ends up divorcing her husband. Her troubles begin when her husband Robert

(Thomas Meighan) tries to spice up their home life by buying her a present – a saucy negligée with matching boudoir slippers and stockings. This garment, draped with ropes of beads, dripping with fur and lace, seems to be a forecast of the type of costumes worn in DeMille's famous biblical epics from the later 1920s: it connotes the foreign, the exotic and thus the erotic.

Beth rejects the symbolism of this garment however; whereas Sally, the dress shop modiste who models the negligée for Robert, wants to look provocative in the item, and removes the gown's under-slip so that the sheer fabric shows the maximum amount of skin, Beth replaces the missing slip with one of her own bulky cotton ones, prompting Robert to remark '… in the shop, it looked – thinner'. Beth and Sally are contrasted overtly here; the lawful wife wants no physical contact or erotic disturbances in her calm, ordered life, while the eventual girlfriend, Sally, is more than keen for a physical relationship with Robert. The film shows that Sally manages to tempt him to stray through an assault on his senses – her lair features soft furnishings, heady perfumes, pulsing rhythmic music and the lavish provision of alcohol – significantly a liqueur called 'Forbidden Fruit'. Robert is tempted to kiss Sally and then remembers his marriage vows, but this small error is enough to make Beth divorce him; smelling Sally's perfume on her husband's clothes, she insists on a separation.

But Beth really loves her husband and is miserable after he is gone. Having lost him over a disagreement about decency in dress, which has deeper symbolic resonances of her attitude to sex, she receives her moment of epiphany, appropriately, in a dress-shop cubicle. Her aunt Kate is trying to cheer her up after the divorce by suggesting a new wardrobe; Beth claims she hates 'clothes – and men!', showing that she is aware how closely the two are involved and how the attraction of one depends on the attractiveness of the other. She then overhears two women in the cubicle next door criticising her dress sense and blaming this for her recent divorce. Beth becomes furious and determines to confound her critics by becoming the ultimate vamp, violently tearing off her own modest clothes and draping herself in new seductive fabrics, ordering dresses that are 'sleeveless, backless, transparent, indecent'.

Significantly, and illustrating how the shopping sequence works as transformation, merely ordering and selecting these garments is enough

Why Change Your Wife? 1: Beth as prudish matron…

to confer the type of active sexuality which Robert prefers and the film endorses as ensuring a healthy marriage. Appearing in a scandalous bathing outfit at an exclusive resort, Beth manages to attract her former husband back to her. While all her behaviour is seen to alter – she is flirtatious, sensual and seeks erotic contact – it is in her dress that the most obvious and radical transformation has occurred, and because of her acquisition of these new garments that she has become a new woman.

Beth eventually wins her former husband back; a coda shows them together again enjoying all the sensual delights she had formerly banned from their home. Listening to throbbing music, dancing together, letting him smoke his cigar and drink in the parlour, the new Beth has one more revolution to make: she slips away and then returns dressed in the original negligée that caused the friction between them. A matter-of-fact final shot shows the servants pushing the couple's twin beds together again: marriage-sanctioned sex is the result of the wife's new style of dress.

While the entire film pays witness to the power of clothing to alter oneself and attract others, the specific power of shopping as an agent for change is attested by the scene in the dress shop. Beth can alter her behaviour, swapping prudery for flirtatiousness, simply by a change of clothing: she becomes the woman her husband wants, a totally different personality type, by buying the clothes that type of woman would buy.

Thoroughly Modern Millie (1967) usefully embodies many of the elements accompanying the shopping transformations already cited, and crystallises a new one. Millie Dillmount (Julie Andrews) comes to New York City in 1922 to be a typist. The film's credit sequence begins with Millie dressed in old-fashioned garb: she wears a grey suit, with a long ankle-length full skirt, lace-up boots and a hat trimmed with flowers over long curled hair. Over the length of the title song, sung by Andrews in voice-over (i.e., not performed by her character within the scene, but over it), Millie transforms from this staid young woman of the 1900s to a dashing flapper of the roaring twenties. First she changes her hair, substituting a bob for her curls, and then changes her outfit and footwear. Finally she gains the flapper's boyish silhouette.

Why Change Your Wife? 2: … and as sexy spouse

Throughout the scene Millie is prompted to make her purchases by viewing other women already enjoying theirs. She sees the sleek bobbed hairstyles of other women on the street and this gives her the idea to emulate them. Each time she emerges from a shop wearing her new acquisition, she smiles happily at conforming to this latest fashion, but quickly realises there is something else needed before her transformation is complete. Having achieved the correct hairstyle, Millie is content until she notices the old-fashioned length of her hemline and her sturdy boots. Next, exiting a dress store clad in a light grey knee-length day dress, grey stockings and shoes and an iconic twenties cloche hat and rope of beads, Millie is smugly sure of herself, confidently striding down the street until, again, she notices a difference between herself and the other women passing, women who have got it right: their beads hang straight… This scene aptly acknowledges one of the truths about fashion and consumerism: there is *always* something else to buy. Millie is the ideal consumer, as she constantly monitors her own clothes and accessories against those of others, and spends in order to fit in with them.

Millie also weighs her success as a clued-in shopper by the reaction of men. After her haircut, but before she changes her outfit, she sees two men stare at a well-dressed young woman in the street. One of the men sports a straw hat with a very noticeable polka-dot hatband, and this enables the viewer to identify him again later in the scene, when, once more parading down the street, he and his companion turn their heads to follow another well-dressed female – this time it is Millie, who receives their approbatory glances with a mock bashful lowering of her eyelids and a smug smile.

One final element to note in this sequence from *Thoroughly Modern Millie* is that it too employs that withholding of the star in her familiar guise that we have noted as a recurrent factor in the transformation. While the audience recognises Julie Andrews' clear, bell-like tones singing the opening lines of the title song, her appearance at the start is very different from usual; with her long curls and Edwardian clothes, Andrews seems very unlike her usual film persona. Once she has had her hair cut, however, she emerges from the Madcap Beauty Spot to the waiting camera and confirms herself as the star we recognise: her short crop now returns to us the actor as we remember her from *The Sound of Music* (1965). Although the shorter

hair does fit with the time period, the haircut seems more 1960s than 1920s, more designed to evoke 'Julie Andrews' than 20s flapper: her haircut is shaped closer to her head than the bob which fits the chronology, such as worn by Clara Bow in *It* and *Hula*.

The shopping sequence thus employs elements found in the other transformation tropes such as the musical interlude, the use of male attention as the affirmation of the revision's success, and the play with the star's own persona; it also emphasises that the usual arc of change is from modest to sexually overt, prude to vixen, at least in appearances. The shopping sequence falls between the visible and invisible transformations as a means to show the alteration of the central figure; it does not show the labour required to achieve the revolution in looks as the rare, visible, transformation does, but it does supply scenes of effort and labour missing from the invisible transformation. This motif suggests that shopping is the labour that will accomplish the desired change, and it is easy to imagine why this should be such a popular concept. Not everyone has the willpower and stamina to undergo rigorous training, dieting and exercise to achieve a new physique; most people do have the necessary finances, however, to buy a new outfit or a magazine with a radical diet plan in it. By showing us that attaining change is as easy as committing to it through purchasing, the films that use the shopping montage encourage viewers to feel better about themselves by spending.

Using the glamour of stars to sell individual products has a long history in advertising, and it can easily be imagined how the vast distance between the transcendent star on the screen and the lowly audience member was exploited by marketing departments, assuring purchasers that buying a face cream or shampoo would bring the star's glamour within the ordinary viewer's reach. The shopping sequence employed in the Hollywood film which features transformation makes the achievement of radical change seem magically easy, encouraging viewers to emulate the stars on screen by buying consumer goods. The reinforcement of the importance of spending can be seen as an obvious message for Hollywood to endorse: it too is in the business of making people buy goods, from the essential movie ticket to various tie-ins. While all film industries, and not just the American mainstream, are in the business of making money, in Hollywood, the overt recognition of this fact occasionally surfaces in the films themselves. In

the 2001 romantic comedy *Kate and Leopold*, for example, there is a self-reflexive moment when the wheels of the plot seem almost audibly to grind to a halt as the heroine, musing over why she has never met the perfect man, reflects on the industry surrounding romantic love:

> Kate: … maybe that whole love thing is just a grown-up version of Santa Claus, just a myth we've been fed since childhood so we keep buying magazines and joining clubs and doing therapy and watching movies with hip-hop songs played over love montages, all in this pathetic attempt to explain why our Love Santa keeps getting caught in the chimney…

Kate may here be testifying to the difficulty of finding true love in the late twentieth century in New York; she is also rather overtly pointing out that the solution to this difficulty, constantly urged on us, is spending money, whether on magazines, which would feature that new diet or outfit, gym club membership for the outer person or therapy for the inner, or indeed movies themselves. Just as *Thoroughly Modern Millie*'s heroine is perpetually reminded that, no sooner has she made one purchase than another commodity arises that she needs to buy, the film viewer is constantly encouraged to spend money in an everlasting cycle of self-monitoring, dissatisfaction and fleeting pleasures. Shopping montages give viewers a momentary frisson of contentment as they can vicariously enjoy the fantasy accumulation of abundance; when, as so often, they are cut to the upbeat strains of a nostalgic song, as in the shopping sequence in *Pretty Woman* (1990), the feelings of positive pleasure that accompany the purchasing involve consumer capitalism in a warm glow, making us feel good about goods.

Very rarely, just as the transformation moment has as its antithesis the invisible transformation, the shopping sequence also finds its shadow-other in film, in the invisible shopping scene. I found one example of this much rarer trope in *The Smiling Lieutenant* (1931). Here the familiar element of the musical interlude which provides a bridge over a period of time is used again; in this sequence the musical number also acts to distract attention from the strangeness of the scene, a shopping sequence with all of the acquisition but none of the purchasing.

The scenario of the sequence runs thus: Princess Anna (Miriam Hopkins) has married Nikolaus 'Niki' von Preyn (Maurice Chevalier), a

lieutenant in the Austrian army. Although this is socially an elevation and politically thus a very good move for Niki, he seems cold and uninterested. Anna discovers he already has a girlfriend, Franzi (Claudette Colbert), the leader of an all-girl orchestra. She summons Franzi to the palace for a showdown, but instead of turning into a catfight for the man, their meeting becomes the occasion for Anna's transformation. During the first minutes of their meeting, while each is summing the other up, judging her appearance and weighing it against her own, the two women are antagonistic to each other, but their conversation and actions revolve around clothing: their sexual and emotional rivalry is displaced onto their outfits. Anna takes Franzi's jacket politely, as a hostess should, but then throws it on the floor petulantly. Franzi looks the princess up and down coolly and dismisses her outfit as being in bad taste. After this brief skirmish, the two exchange slaps and then both fall onto Anna's bed sobbing. After a time Anna gets up and gets two handkerchiefs from a drawer; she and Franzi both enthusiastically blow their noses, the matched actions and sobs here reinforcing the idea that they are, underneath their social differences and dress styles, very similar women. They go on to discuss Niki and again the conversation centres around clothing. Anna praises him in his uniform, but then says she likes him best in his evening suit with straw hat – the very outfit the audience has previously seen Niki wearing while visiting Franzi. She agrees, but then adds, 'If you think he's handsome in that, wait till you see him in –' before breaking off. Franzi's relationship with Niki has been sexual, while he has yet to consummate his marriage. This risqué scene, by devoting its imagery to clothes, can tap into what lies underneath them when it wants to, suggesting the naked sexual body under the concealing layers.

Franzi breaks away from this tricky subject by noticing her hostesses' piano, and goes over to look at the sheet music arranged on the top. The titles of the pieces Anna is accustomed to play give further proof of her innocence and inexperience: 'Cloister bells', 'A Maiden's Prayer'. In a seemingly bizarre non sequitur, which sets up the theme of the imminent musical number, Franzi at once demands: 'Let me see your underwear!' When Anna hesitantly lifts her dress hem to reveal knee-length embroidered bloomers, the case of her own popularity and Anna's neglect by Niki is solved for Franzi; after revealing the filmy silk scanties she herself is wearing, she sits down at the piano and begins to sing, 'Jazz up your lingerie!'

Franzi's song links jazz with colour, tactility and decoration in undergarments; her metaphor, suggesting that they both 'wear music' as their undergarments, works a parallel between Anna's starchy cotton bloomers, her staid classical music and Niki's lack of interest in her, versus her own satin undies, fast modern music and sexual experience. While Franzi exhorts Anna to 'be happy, choose snappy/Music to wear', the other woman supplies the occasional line to make the song a hesitant duet; but this ceases as the number continues and becomes the transformation scene. As Franzi sings and plays, Anna moves from sitting beside her at the piano to the middle of the room where she performs a few jazzy arm gestures. This image dissolves to one of a basket, into which then falls a mass of blonde hair – the transformation has begun. A cut takes the camera to the fireplace, and a fire onto which the offending cotton bloomers are placed. A large nightgown on the bed dissolves into scanty lace alternatives. Then another cut to the shoe closet reveals six pairs of button and lace-up boots: by a dissolve these resolve themselves into more fashionable shoes. This pattern is repeated in another cut to the wardrobe; four long-sleeved wide-waisted dresses dissolve to reveal sleek, sparkly and fur-trimmed replacements, slender and sleeveless. Throughout the scene the changes, but not their agents, are shown.

When the song and the scene ends, the two women leave Anna's palace bedroom. Significantly, both are transformed. Franzi no longer sports the floaty, décolleté dress she entered the palace wearing; she now is dressed in a skirt and jacket, with black hat and gloves; she seems to have shed her glamorous and romantic appearance and to be coded much more as 'career woman'. Since this transformation scene marks her handover of Niki to Anna, it can be seen that all Franzi has left is indeed her career, so this choice of outfit is appropriate.

Anna has changed more radically, however. Gone is her staid hairstyle of neat centre parting and plaits wound round her ears; instead her head is crowned by a smart modern permanent. Her dress style has changed too from a shapeless tube tied under the bust, to a gown cut on the bias, with spangled asymmetrical bodice and layers of ruched tulle below. The two women have not swapped places, exchanging dowdiness and sophistication; instead, while Anna has taken Franzi's place, dress-style and man, the career woman has stepped out of the romantic position and dress style, as she now steps out of the film.

What is significant about this transformation is what it renders invisible. Other films, as explored, chose not to show the work required to turn each 'good' girl into a 'bad' one, as with Sandy in *Grease*, for example, or Madame Satan, in order to maintain suspense and surprise for both characters and audience. Here, however, the emphasis is placed differently. What is elided by the invisibility of the transformation is both time and labour – the labour of others. To make Anna into the new jazz baby who will attract Niki, the work of several servants and professionals must be necessary. Someone must cut and 'marcel' her hair; someone must burn the offensively maidenly knickers; someone else go out to buy the replacement shoes and gowns or bring in samples of likely outfits from suitable shops.

The magical nature of this transformation is played down by the matter of fact revelation of the two metamorphosed women opening the door and stepping into the corridor. The dissolves and cuts have elided the time and amount of help necessary to render them into their new incarnations – career woman and fiery jazz baby – and in later scenes it also seems that Franzi has taken the time to teach Anna jazz piano. The ease and rapidity of these fundamental changes are accomplished without fuss but with wealth. Presumably this is why the Hollywood film is set in the world of European royalty; this fantasy world is one in which radical transformation can be wrought through the magic that is money. Employing a make-believe country and its princess as one of its heroines allows the film to step outside real life into a fantasy zone. Strikingly, the shopping montage, as found in and as so many transformation scenes, manages to co-opt the same fantasy of effortless alteration for stories set in modern urban society, in 'real life'.

In both the shopping sequence and its invisible twin, the emphasis is on the acquisition of new clothes and accessories as the sole labour needed to render the woman metamorphosed into a more glorious version of herself. Significantly, as has been noted in previous sections, the confirmation that the woman has successfully accomplished the transformation is inevitably found in male approbation: in *The Cookie Carnival*, the made-over gingerbread girl is crowned queen by a panel of male judges; in *Grease*, Sandy is hailed by not only Danny but his friends and other assorted males with whistles and astonishment, and in both *Why Change Your Wife?* and *The Smiling Lieutenant* the two newly sexualised wives both manage at last to secure the amorous attentions of their

husbands. As will be considered in the following section, however, the ultimate proof of success in the act of self-revision is the occasion that sometimes comes *before* male approval – the instant where the woman is simply not seen because she is so different.

4) The Misrecognition Moment

This misrecognition moment is a recurrent trope in the context of the transformation. As noted above, it acts as the definitive evidence that the metamorphosis has been a success by implying that the alteration is so radical, the person revised is not recognisably her anymore. While rarer than some of the other tropes examined here, the misrecognition does appear often enough to merit exploration, especially as it features in two of the films which will be the focus of the case studies.

The misrecognition moment is also one of the most homogenous tropes; when found, it tends to play out in exactly the same visual and thematic terms each time. For example, returning to the moment at the end of *Grease* when Sandy appears metamorphosed from rigid maiden into willing vixen, there is a clear if brief instance of the misrecognition trope. Danny's friends see Sandy's alteration and gape at it before he himself notices; even then, before we see his reaction, we have a reverse cut to the object of all the visual and oral attention, as Sandy's legs in her tight black trousers and high-heeled red shoes strut into the scene. The cut back to Danny shows him glance in the direction of his friends' gaze, and then briefly away. He has seen the woman but simultaneously not seen her: he does not know who she is. Sandy's alteration is so extreme, from the prudish Sandra Dee character in her pastel sweetheart-line dresses (with all this outline, as Turim (1984) has explained, connotes about her sexual innocence), to the raunchy high school femme fatale showing off her dangerous curves, that Danny does not at once realise it is the same person. Examination of his face shows a clearly distinct if rapid progression between non-recognition, doubt and dawning comprehension, as the miracle of his fantasy's fulfilment is made plain.

Pretty Woman contains another similar scene, where the man's incomprehension of the identity of the woman before him acts to confirm her success in transforming. As we will explore, notions of identity and of

internal and external are intimately intertwined with the transformation metaphor; here, the woman's apparent other identity actually confirms the fulfilment of the potential always inherent in her own identity but never before attained. Vivian (Julia Roberts), a prostitute on the streets of Los Angeles, has been purchased as a companion for the week by millionaire Edward (Richard Gere) in order to accompany him to various dinners and social events. Obviously, her hooker garb will not be appropriate wear for these occasions, so he empowers her to go shopping with his credit card. Edward has agreed to meet Vivian in the bar of his hotel; entering, he looks around, sees the woman but again does not see that it is her. The scene reinforces the significance of the moment for both of them through its choreography, revealed through deep focus: in the background Vivian sits at the bar with her back to the room, while Edward is seen in the near-ground looking around for her. Before he realises the well-dressed and elegant woman at the bar is indeed her, she turns her head, perhaps sensing his stare. He turns towards the camera and viewer; she turns simultaneously, producing a satisfying symmetry which gives the scene a pulse. Their relative viewpoints shift, from him looking unknowingly at the back of her head, to her looking at the back of his. We have seen neither of their faces; now the film returns them both to us and gives us the first view of Vivian transformed into a lady in her cocktail dress. The camera set up then changes, becoming placed between them for Edward's reaction shots, as he realises who the elegant woman must be: he turns back to her, narrows his eyes as if both appraising and doubting his vision.

An even more pronounced instance of the misrecognition moment occurs in *Silk Stockings:* after Ninotchka's autoerotic ballet with her new consumer durables, she comes down in the lift to the foyer of the hotel where her lover, Steve (Fred Astaire), is waiting for her. He is seen leaning against the front desk indolently; as Ninotchka steps out of the lift to the collective astonishment of the other men in the lobby, he continues to stare off into space. Even when Ninotchka approaches him directly he gives her only a rather dismissive glance and then looks away, as if being importuned by another beautiful woman. But then he 'gets it' and looks back with a start and a wide-armed gesture of amazement, 'Oh no, it can't be!'

This misrecognition perhaps hints that it is the clothes and not the woman, or perhaps the messages and meanings that the clothes seem to

bear, or the money she has obviously spent on the clothes, that the men in these misrecognition scenes are reading, since Ninotchka has not altered her hair and seemingly wears no makeup. It is not her face or hairstyle, but only her outfit which has changed from military, utilitarian and desexualised, to glamorous, ultra-feminine and sensual.

While, then, the misrecognition moment is one of the rarer tropes found recurring in the filmic transformation, it does occur with sufficient regularity to make it noticeable, and with a certain visual inevitability that renders it significant. As it also gestures towards ideas about identity and about authenticity of the self, concepts that circle round the idea of transformation, it justifies attention. The misrecognition moment relies on the man not witnessing the work that has been done to change the woman: were he to see the actual scenes of the transformation, he could no longer respond with his spontaneous act of misidentification. This accounts for the misrecognition moment accompanying the invisible transformation, as with *Grease*, *Madame Satan*, *Pretty Woman* and *Silk Stockings*. Although *Pretty Woman* shows the audience the shopping montage that stands in for, and acts as, Vivian's metamorphosis, and the other films provide narrative hints that self-revision will be attempted, the man who is the occasion for the transformation must not be allowed to observe it.

Many of the tropes utilised to tell the Hollywood transformation story are, as noted, bound up with ideas about identity and authenticity. With the next trope examined, however, the intimate connection between external and internal, and their effects on each other, is fiercely disavowed: profoundly involved with ideas of disguise, concealment and deceit, the false transformation acts to reinforce the habitual association of appearance and character by providing specific circumstances in which these associations are undermined.

5) The False Transformation

Madam Satan is a useful place to begin the examination of the false transformation trope, since its basic plot-lines and events have already been reviewed. The false transformation operates when the central protagonist appears to have undergone a radical metamorphosis, but this is in fact not so: the change is only feigned, the new persona a masquerade.

Angela differs from the wronged wives in *Why Change Your Wife?* and *The Smiling Lieutenant* because, unlike them, her change of costume, although as extreme as theirs, is not meant to be symbolic of an equivalent personality alteration. While all three films set up very stark binary oppositions between prim and willing, prudish and frank, sensuous and ascetic, with the women first on the more staid side of the dichotomy, crossing over to the other more liberal side after their transformatory outfit is donned, Angela, unlike Beth and Anna, has not really been altered so easily. The film takes great pains to show that her performance as Madam Satan is just that, a performance, and one that is also not entirely tasteful to her. Angela has been driven to seeming, rather than becoming, her contrary, whereas Beth and Anna enthusiastically embrace their polar opposites. Angela's masquerade is adopted first in rage, to oppose the showgirl who has stolen her husband, but then it is used in the hope of convincing Bob that he really does prefer the modest, more passive type of woman, like his wife.

Madam Satan ends as the other two films also do, with the married couple happily re-established, but Angela's work to achieve her happy ending is more difficult than the other women's. She has not changed, bringing herself into line with her husband's desires for a more sexually responsive partner; moreover, Bob feels she has humiliated him through her pretence. Angela's agency has been turned to pretence, to masquerading as another woman, rather than, more acceptably, *becoming* one through costume, styling and shopping.

Phantom Lady (1944) seems to grant a good narrative excuse to its heroine, Carol 'Kansas' Richman, for her masquerade; she undertakes it in order to save the life of her boss (whom she loves), when he is accused of murdering his wife and sentenced to death. Carol believes in his innocence, and sets out to prove it. One attempt at finding evidence necessitates vamping a low-life jazz drummer, Cliff Milburn (Elisha Cook Jr) who also plays in a theatre orchestra. Carol entices him to reveal his knowledge of the real murderer, but significantly does not do so in her proper person. She transforms herself, becoming the kind of girl that would tempt Cliff: Jeannie, a 'hep kitten'. A cut between scenes effects Carol's change from smart-suited secretary to cheap date; the camera finds her sitting in the theatre audience giving Cliff the eye. But Jeannie herself is twice the

object of the camera's pan-up of approval. The second look reproduces Cliff's as he eyes up the woman flirting with him, but the first is linked to the camera and thus the viewer alone. This sweep up her body, dwelling on her legs in fishnets, her tight satin dress, overly made-up face and excessive junky jewellery, underlines the extremity of the transformation from good girl to bad: without this intense stare at the woman we might not recognise in her the plucky heroine. This look of non-recognition is repeated in the next scene when Carol/Jeannie goes to a jam session with Cliff; he kisses her and she retreats to a mirror to reapply her lipstick. The look of misrecognition she gives is then at herself, what she has become because of this masquerade; Carol shakes her head in revulsion at the depths to which she is prepared to sink in order to save her man.

The film too seems worried about the excessive charge of Jeannie's sexuality and does not dwell on how the prim Carol amassed the cheap items she needs for her masquerade as the evidently lower-class, sexually experienced woman. Thus even given the best of motives for their protagonists, Hollywood films find the false transformation worrisome and often punish the woman who indulges in them; Carol is menaced and eventually attacked by the real murderer.

This tacit disapproval for the woman who merely appears to change is often found accompanying the false transformation; in *Madam Satan*, although she does win Bob back, Angela has to work hard to do so and to dissipate the negative charge carried in the narrative for her as a woman who uses active powers not to change herself but to attempt to change her husband. In *The Major and the Minor*, Susan Applegate's masquerade as her own younger self, Su-Su, is sanctioned generically as she is in a comedy and narratively because she is a nice girl trying to flee the many male wolves in New York City; even so, although her disguise allows her successfully to ride the train for the wrong fare, it prevents her from getting what she then comes to want, a romantic relationship with Major Philip Kirby (Ray Milland), and she suffers many comic embarrassments until she gives up the deception.

The taint of deceitfulness that surrounds the alteration of the exterior when it is not matched by a similar change to the interior person explains why the false transformation is often found given a negative portrayal, especially in narratives from darker genres like the thriller or noir. The

notion of the metamorphosis being not merely a disguise but also temporary inheres in this trope, further unsettling the connection between exterior and interior.

As mentioned, the changing of outfits in *Final Analysis* employs the invisible transformation trope in order to maintain the suspense of the narrative. The occasion of Diana (Uma Thurman) changing clothes with her sister Heather (Kim Basinger) is not the only transformation in the film, however; the story is concerned throughout with ideas about transformation, seeming and false-seeming. It also appears highly referential; while the repeated emphasis on metamorphosis of the caterpillar to butterfly only coincidentally echoes the Méliès film with which this book began, the evocation of *Vertigo* is very much meant. *Vertigo* is intimately concerned with doubling, seeming and being, and the Pygmalion role in crafting the woman to look like – herself. *Final Analysis* borrows the Hitchcock film's San Francisco setting, flawed hero and fall from tall building, but also makes use of the central idea that costume provides character information. In trusting this, the film's hero, Ike (Richard Gere) is led into the deception plot.

Diana is in analysis with Ike, and turns up to her sessions with him drably dressed. In the first analytic session we see, the pair have an exchange of dialogue which neatly introduces the metamorphosis theme:

> Diana: Compared to [sister Heather] I always felt like a creeping and crawling caterpillar.
>
> Ike: Well, a caterpillar turns into a butterfly, doesn't it?
>
> Diana: Heather's the butterfly, isn't that obvious?

This conversation comments on the earth-toned outfits that Diana habitually wears in the first part of the film, and sets up the expectation that she will attain her metamorphosis later on. It also hints that Diana and Heather are not two sisters, but two versions of the same person, Diana the 'before' and Heather the 'after'. Since both sisters turn out to have psychological complexes rendering them dangerous, this doubling of the female in one form acts to suggest their pathology; unlike a patient with a split-personality, these two women have one personality between them, one personality with two chronological stages.

When Ike meets Heather, who comes to his office to talk about her sister with the psychiatrist, she appears in his doorway in visual terms that inevitably evoke the femme fatale. With half her face in light, and the other half in darkness, Heather is reminiscent of the evil spider-women of film noir, who classically appear with their personality splits made evident by the chiaroscuro lighting which is a hallmark of such films (Place and Peterson: 66–67). Whereas the use of this stylistic device in *Double Indemnity* (1947) and *The Big Heat* (1953) is meant to signal the femme fatale's good/bad character division, a rupture in the wholeness of her personality, with Heather the duality hinted at in these visual terms finds embodiment, not in another side of Heather herself, but in her sister.

Heather appears throughout the first part of the film in clothes as glamorous, figure-hugging and sexualised as her sister's are drab, shapeless and de-sexing. When Diana finally adopts this more co-ordinated, classic and colourful style, it is at the moment that her sister is in her prison uniform of denim casuals: the sisters maintain the duality between them, as Heather now steps into the glamorous side of the binary and Heather declines into the dowdy. Diana overtly asserts as much when she goes to meet Ike after her sister is imprisoned: slipping into the seat opposite him in a restaurant, now wearing a purple top and black suit, with her hair both more lush and more consciously styled, Diana now resembles the glamorous and confident woman her sister was previously, and tells the surprised man, 'Caterpillar's become a butterfly'. But the transition is impermanent; having realised that Ike has used her against her sister, Diana's loyalties veer back the other way, and she willingly takes back the lacklustre garb, allowing for the substitution and escape analysed earlier. At the end of the film, when the narrative strings have been tied up and the viewer has seen Heather fall to her death trying to kill Ike, a brief coda hints that the pathology inherent in the sisters has not, unlike Heather, been vanquished. Diana, again glamorised, wearing an evening dress, is sitting in an intimate restaurant. She tells her male dining companion that she is an only child, that her name is Heather – and, accepting a glass of champagne, that she really isn't supposed to drink… This somewhat incoherent ending seems to suggest that the sisters' murderous mischief will continue, although the working of the original duplicity depended on there being the two sisters, one to hook in the psychiatrist, the other for him to romance. Although

this ending is a rather shaky one narratively, it does serve to underline the stark dichotomy of positions available to the women; the continued association of the character 'Heather' with sexualised glamour inevitably implies the presence of her shadow-other, drab Diana, even if the woman in the final scene describes herself as an only child.

If *Final Analysis* presented the doubling of two women and the Manichean inevitability of their linking, *The Last Seduction* provides false transformations in even more giddying numbers. Although there is only one woman to view in her various outfits, these and the changes they seem to attest in her personality, are very numerous. 'Seem to', however, is the moot point, since the protagonist of the film is only too aware of how clothes are read as indicative of the person inside them.

Bridget Gregory (Linda Fiorentino) is involved in a drug deal with her husband Clay (Bill Pullman). When he returns to their New York home with the money, Bridget runs out on him, taking the money and escaping to upstate New York, where she stops in a small town near Buffalo and begins to try to find legal means, via divorce, of keeping the money and keeping away from Clay. She finds a job in a local company and gives herself a false name, Wendy Kroy.[4] She also finds a man to have sex with: Mike Swale (Peter Berg), a young local.

Significantly, Bridget's outfits do not modulate because she has moved from the fast-paced, cut-throat metropolis to the more sleepy semi-rural town: she continues to wear the uniform of black jacket, short black skirt, white blouse, black panties, black stockings and black high heels, in which we first saw her at her job in New York, despite the fact that her new colleagues and neighbours dress much more casually. Bridget's identity seems quite stable, then; despite Stella Bruzzi's assertion (1997) that the femme fatale is inherently instable, and shows this instability in the number of unmotivated costume changes she makes (129), Bridget maintains her uniform and her selfhood, even during sex, which she generally enjoys either dressed or semi-clad.

Bridget is fully conscious, moreover, of how this outfit makes her seem: a tantalising mixture of the efficient and sexy, the prim and fetishistic. Throughout the film she is shown to be aware of the effect her clothes have on others: when she wants to convince Mike to take part in her next money-making scheme, she changes her look, transforming herself by

wearing his denim shirt to enforce the bond he wants there to be between them. This is a conscious costume manipulation very much along the lines of another piece of theatre she stages: again to convince him that she is romantically attached to him, Bridget doodles 'I love Mike' on a memo pad, leaving it prominently by her bed. In both instances Bridget plays on Mike's fantasy that 'Wendy' has a softer, more vulnerable side; her costume change is a visual parallel to this lexical pretence.

The film offers other scenes where Bridget/Wendy consciously adapts her costume in order to manipulate the reactions and fantasies of the men around her. When her husband manages to track her down and has his hired detective sit in his car outside her house, she dons a lacy apron and goes out to the car with freshly baked cookies – and a spiked stick to put under the tyres. The detective reads the outfit of the woman and assumes that there is a connection between it and her personality; as seen throughout these transformation tropes, the intimate connection of internal and external, the latter acting as an index of the former, is constantly assumed by the films and their characters. In this instance, however, Bridget seems to step outside the diegesis, acting as her own costume designer to control the way others read her. Thinking her a generous housewife, the detective does not pay attention to her actions and ends up with a flat tyre.

Other men within her orbit make the same mistake, reading her clothes and assuming some consonance between them and the person inside them, and these others pay more dearly for their inaccurate assumptions. The secret of Mike's former marriage is revealed to Bridget when she puts on a blazer, picks up a clipboard and masquerades as an official from the State Health Department. Notably, Bridget adopts male clothing, including men's Y-front pants under her masculine suit, for the climax of her plotting, when she manages to tie up her scheme by murdering Clay and successfully blaming Mike. Despite her employment of masculine clothing here, Bridget has not abandoned her feminine costume. In the film's final scene she re-dons it, but now eschews her usual black and white ensemble and its crisp structured look, for a floor-length supple tube of sludgy green. Bridget partly resembles a caterpillar before its metamorphosis, and partly seems like a roll of dollar bills. Perhaps this is most appropriate as she is now, with all her plots accomplished,

extremely wealthy. The butterfly metaphor might also suggest that having served time dressed as men want her to appear – as a sexy dominatrix – Bridget can now afford to ignore their fantasies and give herself time to contemplate how she wants to appear, who she wants to be – to pupate, perhaps, into a different person.

It is rare to find an instance of the false transformation outside the thriller genre or one having its overt deceit condoned by the narrative. One comic example inflects the false transformation so that its duplicity becomes permissible: in *Overboard* (1987), the transformation is wrought by a man on a woman who has lost her memory. The amnesia acts as a plot device to effect her total transformation; despite the film's light tone and eventual happy ending, however, the trope still draws attention to issues around identity and authenticity, just as the darker films do. Having lost her memory, the heroine is, seemingly, wiped clean: she has no character until her 'husband' tells her what she is like. Since he is making up her personality, the woman is patterning herself on someone who never existed, acting as a copy for which there is no original. While thus a light-hearted romantic and comic film, *Overboard* still maintains the false transformation's habitual association with unsettling concepts.

Joanna Stayton (Goldie Hawn) is a snooty rich woman, living on a yacht with her husband. She hires local handyman Dean Profitt (Kurt Russell) to make her a closet on the yacht but dislikes his work, refuses to pay him and knocks him overboard. She herself later falls off the yacht and suffers a concussion which leaves her an amnesiac. The police issue her picture and Dean, seeing it, realises he can be revenged on her: he claims her as his wife, 'Annie'. Taking her home, he introduces her to 'their' children, their house and their past history together. In putting this latter together he is careful to choose details that are the precise opposite of the truth of Joanna's past and personality as he knows or imagines these to be. He thus presents her with a list of dichotomies, based on her now-unknown self, so that Joanna transforms by passing from one half of these stark binaries to the other:

Rich	Poor
Prim	Liberal

Puritanical	'Slutty'
Clean	Dirty
Educated	Unschooled
Unimaginative	Creative
Mean	Generous
Cold	Affectionate
Frigid	Passionate

As we can see, while the line between these binaries remains rigid, which side is 'right' modulates throughout the film. The film has no doubt that it is better to be rich as Joanna originally is, than poor like Dean and his sons; equally, however, the narrative endorses Joanna's increasing warmth and generosity, as she relaxes into family life and comes to care for Dean and the boys. While Dean operates to a certain extent as Pygmalion to Joanna's Galatea, in crafting her persona while she is still blank from the concussion, the woman she eventually becomes having spent time with the family is not the hillbilly slattern he initially projected, but a creative and happy woman with smart ideas.

Having set up Dean's deceitful manipulation of Joanna, the film cannot allow her to continue to live with and love him unaware of his trickery: the masquerade must be exposed in comic films. Joanna regains her memory and realising the imposture perpetrated upon her, returns to her yacht. Once back in her 'real' life, however, Joanna evinces signs of a hangover from her stay with the Profitts: she prefers beer from the bottle to champagne, and no longer treats her servants snootily but befriends them, finding them more down to earth and congenial than her own family. Eventually she chooses to jump overboard again and swim back to Dean, who loves her too.

Overboard allows Joanna a second chance at being a real human being, and a hiatus, a space, where she can learn to be different. The transformation of her character is thus real even though its original premises were false. Having been wiped clean by the amnesia, Joanna has no character, she is blank like the material from which Pygmalion carved

his masterpiece, the statue with whom he falls in love, just as Dean does. By suggesting, however, that underneath the front of hauteur and arrogance Joanna maintains there is actually nothing fundamental, the film unsettlingly hints that there may be no true self behind her mask – and those of how many others? This notion of the 'true self' is one which is profoundly connected with the transformation motif, and will now be considered in detail.

6) The True Self

Throughout the explorations of films which use the transformation motif, there has been the recurrent notion of the metamorphosis acting somehow both as a change and simultaneously as a confirmation of qualities already inherent in the woman. An illuminating example is provided by *She's All That* (1999), a teen-pic which loosely revisits ideas in Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Zach Siler (Freddie Prinze Jr) is the most popular boy in high school; dumped by his girlfriend, he asserts to a friend that he can make any girl win the Prom Queen's crown just because she's with him. His friend picks geeky, artistic outsider Laney Boggs (Rachael Leigh Cook), calling forth Zach's protests even though the audience can see that Laney is gorgeous under her paint-stained overalls and heavy glasses. The film does not attempt to suggest Zach himself could achieve a convincing makeover of Laney; instead his younger sister goes to work on our heroine, with a makeup box and a new dress. This scene is acutely spoofed in *Not Another Teen Movie*, where the sister character, eyeing up and appraising 'Janey Briggs' critically, declares 'This might seem crazy, but you're going to have to trust me'. Her radical action is to take the girl's hair out of its customary ponytail and remove her glasses: everyone is astonished at the results, while she herself exults 'I'm a miracle worker!' The spoof makes use of the audience's extra-diegetic position, being aware of the heroine's real attractiveness, and mocks the convention which insists that the glamorous star can ever be dowdy.

She's All That conforms to the notion that the metamorphosis Zach instigates is not so much a makeover as a make-clearer: Laney has always been a lovely person, but now her exterior matches her interior qualities, rendering her properly visible for the first time. Importantly, then, although

Laney has her hair and clothes changed, the film insists that her only personality alteration is the gaining in confidence which accompanies her acceptance by Zach. Her transformation allows the 'real Laney', beautiful and desirable, to be released from her shy and insecure shell. In reality she has *always* merited the queen's crown, and the romance with Zach as Prom King that accompanies it.

While *She's All That* devotes much of its running time to the ongoing transformation of Laney which Zach accomplishes, turning her from outcast freak (artist, intellectual) into glamorous babe, the scene where, newly glamorised by Zach's sister, she reveals her new look, is endowed with resonance within the narrative and, with its romantic music, glamour lighting and diegetic audience of astonished, impressed males, acts as a highlight of the film. The film thus dwells on the Pygmalion aspects of the plot while also insisting that Laney does not really alter in anything except increased confidence. This is an illogicality that transformation texts repeat compulsively.

These films present the central metamorphosis visually and narratively as a radical revolution and concurrently as something that merely makes obvious what always was. This raises, it seems to me, two questions: why should there be an assumed link between exterior form and interior quality, and why should the metamorphosis work so hard both to show the necessity of external change and then deny it actually represents 'change' at all?

Richard Sennett, in his examination of evolving notions of public and private, *The Fall of Public Man* (1977), notes that different cultures and historical periods have differing ideas about the significance of clothes; costume has not been seen at all times and in all countries as the external manifestation of the self. He dates the assumption that exterior form does echo interior qualities, and can thus be read as an index of personality, to the middle of the nineteenth century in Europe. Before going on to look in detail at Thomas Carlyle's influential 1838 tract about the power of clothes, *Sartor Resartus*, Sennett notes that by the time Carlyle was writing it had become accepted that external 'appearances are direct expressions of the inner self' (153) and therefore 'clothes are expressions of individual personality' (189). As the perfume seller remarks to Ann in the *Gold Diggers* shopping sequence, choosing the right consumer item can be a quest to

find the one which 'brings out all the charm in your personality'. Costume and its accompanying accessories can act as guides to the inner self.

Sennett raises another point which has significance for this study of transformation motifs in film: he notes a problem in assuming that clothes act as indices of their wearers' character which lies in costume's existence as a commodity, an item exchanged for money. While there is fashion, and silhouettes, hemlines, fabrics come in and go out of favour, people will be buying new clothes and thus adopting different costumes without necessarily possessing the qualities the clothes suggest they possess. Clothes therefore cannot act as the guarantee of internal quality:

> … in fashion, once anyone could pass on a certain set of terms, those terms became meaningless. A new set of clues, a new code to penetrate arises; the mystification of personality is as continued as the mystification of new goods in stores. (168)

While Sennett considers the difficulty of reading inner personality from outer garments in terms of the person's continued unknowability, it is very suggestive that he compares this unknowability, the 'mystification' of the character, with the 'mystification of new goods'. This phrase implies both the innumerable nature and the allure of new commodities: as the heroine found in the opening sequence of *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, there is always something else to buy, to wear; there is always something remaining to suggest about one's self.

Sennett's point also indicates a further cause for unease: the very mutability of the self, the instability of its parameters if it can be altered by an external garment. Inconsistently, while Hollywood vaunts the power of external items to provide information about a person's character, the films which subscribe to this common idea do not suggest that one's personality is unstable or susceptible to external forces. This is the basic paradox within the transformation concept: the person both has a defined character which can be read through her clothes and one which is mutable by the costumes which adorn it.

It thus seems to me that the transformations' compulsive return to the notion of the 'true self' is explained by its role as a concept which attempts, however feebly, to smooth over the tensions inherent in the paradoxical insistence both on the self's stability and the visible evidence to the

contrary which these movies rely on. Insisting that each of us has an authentic identity that is enhanced, rather than altered, by an overhaul of our wardrobes permits the films a cake-and-eat-it licence: they can show the satisfying revolution of the exterior shell and yet deny the interior is so unstable that a mere haircut or new dress can affect it.

Intriguingly, while *She's All That* and other films knowingly evoke the Pygmalion myth, the 'true self' motif actually taps into the Cinderella narrative, removing the emphasis on male agency as the impetus for the changes made and returning it to magic. As Iona and Peter Opie noted, the enchantment on Cinderella is not when she is at the ball, glittering and adored, but when she is in the kitchen, sooty and over-worked (1980). The glamorous state is her true self, which evil, generally in the form of a wicked step-mother, conspires to hide under the grubby disguise of the kitchen slavey. In this way, Laney and all the other transformed females are not themselves when they are dowdy and drab and bespectacled; they just need to clear away the enchantment of the false exterior to reveal the true beauty which lies within.

To recap, then, there has been a traditional belief in the linkage of a person's external form and internal character in Western culture since the mid-nineteenth century, and this is what the film transformations can clearly be seen tapping into: whenever a character changes her outfit and is hailed as a new, more attractive person all-round because of that costume change, the old assumptions about exterior mirroring interior are in play. At the same time, however, films which exploit the transformation motif are keen to stress that when the exterior alters it somehow enhances, releases, the inner beauty that was always there, rather than wiping away one set of characteristics and replacing them with another. The 'true self' idea is there to attempt to unite these flagrant contradictions.

Many of the films already considered in other sections can be seen to be using their transformation scenes to attest the stable existence of the central female's authentic persona. For example, in *Moonstruck*, Loretta's dowdy 'before' exterior hides the fact that she is a strong, passionate and sensual woman: although her metamorphosis allows these qualities to be revealed, it does not originate them, they were there already, lying dormant and waiting for the right circumstances (love, sex, clothes) to liberate them. This permanence of character contrasts with the shifting, mutable nature of

appearances; again the films create the paradox around the metamorphosis that it seems to initiate radical change but is actually merely unlocking characteristics that were already there.

Films that use the metamorphosis concept therefore need to keep some kind of balance between suggesting the revision is a total revolution and maintaining that nothing of any consequence has changed. Perhaps this could explain why the scenes which deal with the transformation – whether by actually showing it being worked on, or by showing its visual stand-in, shopping, or its effects, in the 'big reveal' scene and its concomitant, the misrecognition moment – are generally accompanied by music: this both hints at the fantasy aspects of the scene being unfolded and also carries the viewer along with its emotion. Shopping scenes cut to popular hits thus carry both visual and aural charges, creating spectacular moments which distract the viewer from the contradictions being bundled together on screen, as can be seen in *Pretty Woman*; by achieving the transformation within the space of a song, the viewer is distracted from unsettling notions of personality impermanence. Even the most radical of transformations, ones which seem to act to negate the woman's past sexual experience, as with Vivian in *Pretty Woman* and Audrey in *Little Shop of Horrors*, are carefully presented in ways which stress the permanence of character, even if this then necessitates backpedalling at the level of the narrative.

The release by schlubby Seymour of Audrey's inner good girl is played out as a musical fantasy sequence on one occasion, as she daydreams about being married to him, living 'in a tract house of our own/Somewhere that's green', a safe space of abundant consumables and domestic expertise where 'I cook like Betty Crocker/And I look like Donna Reed'. Audrey's wish to transform herself from city slut to suburban housewife is simply achieved in her daydream through a costume change, a mere alteration of outline, from the curve-hugging garb of Turim's 'sexual warrior' to the multi-petticoated innocence of the 'sweetheart' dress. As Audrey sits in her cramped one-room apartment in a tight, strappy dress, she visualises her fantasy self in the suburban bungalow in a series of typical fifties 'sweetheart line' dresses, all in Tupperware-shade pastels or with prominently displayed spotless white collars and cuffs, symbols both of her new unbesmirched sexual history and her material affluence.

For Audrey associates being a good girl, a woman who has played the game and kept herself pure for marriage, with being a good consumer, a housewife with not only a house and a husband but 'a washer, and a drier, and an ironing machine'. Her fantasy is not simply to swap her sadist boyfriend for kindly Seymour, but also to escape her one room in Skid Row for a well-appointed house in the suburbs. Despite the obvious differences both of surroundings and wardrobe, however, continuities between reality and fantasy help to suggest that Audrey's true self would only be released, rather than created, by the changes. Audrey's hairdo, a lacquered helmet of bouffant blonde hair, persists into her daydream, as do her neatly manicured and red-tipped nails. Having her hair and skin remain the same, while only the clothes alter during the reverie, enables Audrey to imagine herself embodying the perfect housewife.

While Audrey dreams of a simple costume transformation both achieving and signalling her renewed sexual innocence, when Seymour claims her for himself later in the film, the metamorphosis involves even less material: far from being a matter of new clothes, it is a simple removal that will return Audrey's wholesomeness. Altering the even more ephemeral and superficial layer of her exterior, her makeup, Seymour assures her, will enable Audrey to resume her true self:

> Seymour: Audrey, [the past is] all behind you now. You've got nothing to be ashamed of. You're a very nice person, I always knew you were. Underneath the bruises and the handcuffs, do you know what I saw? A girl I respected, and still do…
>
> [Sings:] Lift up your head, wash off your mascara
>
> Here take my Kleenex, wipe that lipstick away
>
> Show me a face that's clean as the morning
>
> .....
>
> Audrey: Suddenly Seymour
>
> He purifies me
>
> Suddenly Seymour

Shows me I can

Learn how to be more

The girl that's inside me…

While Audrey has acknowledged her seamy sexual past, Seymour insists this can be cancelled out as easily as shedding its external signs – the lipstick and mascara. Seymour 'purifies' Audrey by seeing through the makeup-wearing woman to the 'girl that's inside' her; in this way he nullifies the suffering and victimhood that she has experienced, as well as the sexual knowledge which instigated it.

Because *Little Shop of Horrors* is a musical fantasy, it can insist the simple act of wiping her makeup off removes Audrey's past. *Pretty Woman*, on the other hand, although tapping into both the Cinderella and Pygmalion stories and being a romantic comedy, is still a generic construction with some obligations towards realism. Simply changing hooker Vivian's wardrobe and makeup from exhibitionist to modest is not, therefore, enough to undo her sexual past. At this point, interestingly, the narrative works to support the costume transformation; rather than leaving the character reading at the indexical level of costume, so that while Vivian's past is acknowledged between the couple it is not visually dwelt on, the dialogue works to support her new assumed/regained innocence. Vivian, it turns out, is not such an experienced hooker after all: in an intimate scene she reveals that she fell into prostitution through loving the wrong man, who then abandoned her in LA with no money; after trying to make enough money for rent at low-paid jobs, she became a hooker and 'got some regulars'.

Since this confession is made during Vivian's week-long tenure as Edward's hire, it makes her professional life seem like a series of longish encounters; the back-story excuses her career choice as an unfortunate accident rather than a conscious decision. The significant factor of prostitution – not that it involves sex with many partners but that it is sex for money – is downplayed, despite the fact that Vivian is only able to admit her past to Edward, as they both lie naked, post-coital, in his hotel bed, because he has paid her to be there with him. Because the film by this point has its eye on the conclusion of the narrative when, per generic

dictates, the couple must be together forever, it is careful to present their relationship as a real romance rather than a business transaction.

The linked motifs of finance and commodification raised in *Pretty Woman* are important ones to the transformation. Although often the narratives which deal with this theme manage to find ways to avoid emphasising the money necessary to achieve a new look, tapping back into the Cinderella tale to provide a Fairy Godmother who will conjure the new wardrobe from nothing (as with *Cookie Carnival* and *Clueless*, for example), at other times the lavish expense of the garments and other accessories purchased is part of the pleasure arranged for the character and, vicariously, the viewer, as in the *Gold Diggers*' shopping spree which ends with the millionaire mother fainting amid a swathe of bills.

Micki McGee, in her study of self-improvement literature, *Self-Help Inc., Makeover Culture in American Life* (2005) suggests that at key moments throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty first consumers have had to become more aware of themselves as products because of the pressures of the labour market. As products, people are subject to fluctuating market value but also possess the potential for upgrade and improvement. In order to remain employable, she finds, workers are encouraged to remake themselves, transforming themselves into whatever their jobs demand. McGee finds this true of both salaried positions and the unpaid job of housewife; in both, constant attention to self must be paid in order to prevent being replaced by a newer, cheaper, model.

McGee's exploration of self-help and improvement literature finds that women especially are increasingly being counselled both to alter themselves, improve their skills and personae, in order to keep up with what is needed in the market, and *simultaneously* to believe in the existence of, and take pains to nurture, their inner, authentic selves outside of the world of money. This paradox plays out similarly to film transformations' concurrent dwelling on and denial of the changeable nature of the self. As McGee notes:

> Paradoxically, the imperative of inventing the self that is found in the literatures of self-improvement is often cast in the form of discovering or uncovering an authentic, unique, and stable self that might function – even thrive – unaffected by the vagaries of the labor market. (16)

McGee asserts that 'Americans turn to self-improvement literature … in times of despair', concluding that the very material sought out to calm worries and suggest recuperation and progress, the self-help books, actually 'may foster, rather than quell, their anxieties' (17). It could also be posited that transformations attempt simultaneously to assuage and agitate the same anxieties in their audiences: the films both show how the lead character determines to make the best of herself and suggest we should be thinking about doing the same. McGee herself does not comment on transformations in film, although she does note the recent flourishing of makeover television (17–18); her contention that Americans seek products that both alleviate and aggravate their worries especially at times of crisis would be interesting to consider in light of observable proliferations of metamorphosis films at specific historical moments.

One point at which the self-help literature as studied by McGee seems to diverge from the filmed transformation is the relative ease with which the latter posits the metamorphosis can be achieved. While films suggest that letting out the true self is as easy as buying the right clothes, haircuts and makeup, McGee finds the books under her consideration suggest mere shopping is not enough:

> While the purchase of a commodity – mouthwash or dandruff shampoo – was once the route to some sense of interpersonal social security, today the simple purchase of a commodity is insufficient: all too easy. Instead one must embrace a lifestyle, a series of regimes of time management or meditation, of diet and spiritual exploration, of self-scrutiny and self-affirmation. (18)

By contrast with this summation of the literature's goals, films using the transformation suggest 'the simple purchase' is enough to ensure the implementation of a 'lifestyle'. The shopping transformations in particular show that purchasing is sufficient for amendment: their goal is to convince consumers that change is both easy and lasting.

McGee's suggestion that the self-help literature purposely creates the conditions for its own continued consumption through positing unachievable goals echoes the endless cycle of necessary purchasing at which *Thoroughly Modern Millie* hints in its revealing opening sequence. It also chimes with Kate's momentary disillusion with the consumer by-products of 'that whole love thing', as cited in the scene from *Kate and Leopold*. Kate notes that advertisers seem to promise the delivery of true

love via a variety of other smaller products necessitating constant consumer action. Kate's speech couples each purchase with a different verb conveying the action of consumption: 'buying magazines … joining clubs … doing therapy … watching movies'. That the purchasable nouns are in the plural also suggests the never-ending nature of acquisition.

The idea of a person owing a duty to *herself* to make the most of *herself* is one which can be found in both the self-help literature and the transformation in film. Repeatedly the metamorphosis moment is accompanied by the notion that one owes it to oneself to be the best one can, to reflect the inner true beauty in one's external form. This can be found, along with several other transformation tropes, in *Hairspray* (2007), in the transformation scene of Tracy's mother, Edna Turnblad (John Travolta). As so often with these metamorphoses, the sequence is played out as a musical interlude; here the song 'Hey Mama, Welcome to the Sixties' seems at first to suggest the establishment of a new decade accompanies that of a new Edna. But then the familiar tropes of the 'true self' creep in: Edna's metamorphosis is not so much a change as a return to her real self. Edna is presented as an agoraphobic ('I haven't left the house since 1951!') who now overcomes her anxieties with a change of hairdo and outfit.

The Turnblads go to a dress emporium for larger ladies called The Hefty Hideway, whose proprietor, Mr Pinky, wants to use Tracy as a spokesperson and model, promising 'complimentary couture' to both mother and daughter. Mr Pinky's establishment is then the scene for Edna's overhaul. Magically, during a single revolution of the swivel chair in which she is sitting, Edna's hair is worked over from clipped-back to bouffant, although her new sparkly pink dress takes a little more work to get into. But during the transformation, which is allowed to unfold on screen even as it is accomplished through editing and is thus both visible and invisible, the emphasis is on the recovery of the old Edna at the same time as the new one is revealed. The beauticians-cum-dress shop assistants give Edna various instructions about embracing makeup and high heels, then enjoin her to 'find a style to make you feel like you'. Edna is therefore not so much *changing* herself, in altering her appearance, as *becoming* herself. She echoes this sentiment herself after her transformation when she sings along with Tracy:

Edna: Your mama's hip, your mama's in
Your mama's lookin' at herself and wondrin', *where you bin*?

Edna's line here recognises that she has been away from herself in allowing her shyness and depression to overcome her authentically ebullient identity; the change of hair and dress allow her true self to return. The transformation of *Hairspray's* Edna neatly encapsulates the major element of the 'true self' trope, which seeks to resolve the tension set up by the idea of the fragile, mutable self through the appeal to an authentic inner core of personality. As noted, however, in considering the notion of the false transformation, the anxiety that the emphasis on the easily changed persona causes results from fears that an identity that alters too quickly cannot be a very stable one. I have posited that filmic transformations try to cure this problem by presenting changes as returns to real, true and authentic inner identities; other films, especially those from the darker genres of thriller and film noir, however, acknowledge these tensions and seek to explore them.

One final film example in this section illuminates the frictions that this disquieting side of the trope pushes forward. *Single White Female* (1992) is a thriller which gives New York career girl Alison Jones (Bridget Fonda) the flatmate from hell in the form of Hedy Carlson (Jennifer Jason Leigh). Hedy seems at first shy but given a little encouragement by her new friend then becomes frighteningly intense about their relationship. The significant point that motivates the unfolding of the plot occurs in a beauty parlour; having previously sported shapeless baggy dresses and jumpers, with her long dark hair shaggy and unkempt, Hedy now treats herself and her friend to a haircut. But this 'surprise' is double-edged: while Allie has her usual crop renewed, Hedy has her own locks coloured and styled to match Allie's exactly. She appears at the top of the salon's staircase and holds the moment smiling unnervingly at Alison, before slowly descending. Her outfit, which like the rest of her wardrobe had become increasingly modelled on Allie's, now matches too: both young women wear tight black shirts over short skirts, their legs bare.

The moment of the transformed Hedy's appearance at the top of the stairs sets off resonances of twins, doppelgangers, reflections. Hedy has built up the event to Alison as being a pleasant treat: 'I have a surprise for you'. Perhaps she imagines that Alison will be pleased the two of them look like

identical twins, that her ego will be stroked by the flattery of having someone want to look like her. Alison, however, picks up on the other resonance, that of the *uncanny* as explored by Freud (1919/1985). A useful definition of the uncanny is that it is 'the familiar made strange': what could be more familiar than one's own face, made strange by seeing it on someone else, not in a mirror but on another person? In his article, Freud cites the work of psychiatrist Ernst Jentsch (1906) on the uncanny and notes the earlier author's grouping together as uncanny objects those which create doubt about their human or living status, such as waxworks, dolls and automata (Freud: 347). The doppelganger, the double of oneself, traditionally presages death in folk mythology and in psychoanalysis hints at the instability of the personality. Freud notes that the doppelganger arouses feelings of the uncanny because it ambiguates boundaries between the self and other so that:

> The subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. (1990: 356)

Hedy forces Allie to experience this shifting sense of self by transforming to look like her. While in Hedy this 'doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self' can be taken as the symptoms of mental illness, in Allie the enforced doubling angers and frightens her; she views it as an eerie trespass on her own identity. Indeed, copying Allie's looks is part of Hedy's plan not just to bring the pair closer but to enable her to pass herself off as her roommate.

Eventually 'Hedy' needs to disappear; a simple change of hair colour and a reversion to the baggy clothing of her earlier persona enables the woman to erase all signs of the character. While Alison fights back and wins in the end, killing Hedy in self-defence, the film ends with a coda which ambivalently suggests the cycle of self-transformation may not be over. The camera, seemingly replicating Alison's intense stare, focuses on a composite image of the two women made into one: the left half of a photograph of Alison and the right half of one of Hedy are juxtaposed to make, apparently, one woman. Alison's voice-over comes in to assure the viewer that she is trying to rebuild her life, attempting, every day, to forgive herself for

surviving since 'I know what can happen to someone who doesn't'. The long-held close-up on the composite image more ambiguously works to suggest, however, that these words are mere bluster: she too has become unhinged, her personality dangerously fluid.

The alteration in *Single White Female* is thus used not to comfort the woman who undergoes it, to return her to some engagement with a notionally authentic identity, but to underline the fact that she possesses a very fluid sense of self which can incorporate elements of the biography and appearance of those she lives with. While there are elements of a back-story provided for Hedy, with a 'real' identity, an estranged family and dead twin, there is a sense that these details are arbitrary and that the real dread Hedy evokes comes from the nebulousness of her personality and past. Hedy absorbs the looks and stories of other women; what then is behind her borrowed mask? The film's coda seems to hint that, if Hedy could become any woman, any woman could just as easily become Hedy, that is, nothing.

Film theorists have found much of relevance in the famous 1929 article 'Womanliness as Masquerade' by psychoanalyst Joan Rivière (Doane, 1982; Heath, 1986). The article posits that women who have achieved career success in their chosen areas sometimes feel they must abase themselves by appearing weak in other arenas; apologising for their career success, they attempt to compensate for seemingly unfeminine mastery of their subjects by showing deficiencies in others. The audience for this abasement and apology is men; the successful women do not want to repel male attention and thus, Rivière suggests, put on a mask of hyper-feminine weakness. The most extreme aspect of Rivière's argument is that there is no controlling persona behind the masquerade – there is, simply, nothing:

> The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade'. My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing. (Rivière, 1986: 38)

This psychoanalytically informed reading posits that 'womanliness' itself is a disguise which actually hides nothing: there is no authentic, true self secreted behind the mask. This ties in with the fears that the transformation's display of unproblematic self-alteration engenders: the

reason the self can be transformed so radically by a new dress or hairdo is that there is no stable, fixed identity inside, no core of authenticity. *Single White Female* and the other edgier films which make use of the transformation theme in this way do not seek to allay these fears through employing the 'true self' motif, but to exploit them, making use of our dread of looking, and finding nothing behind the mask. This fear is taken to its extremes in *The Stepford Wives* (1975), which manages to effect its transformation of a whole town of forward-thinking, trouser-wearing feminists into submissive, traditional home-makers clad in floor-length gowns, through a simple expedient: replacing all the real women with their robot doubles. Here the doppelganger myth really does spell death for the original: central character Joanna (Katharine Ross) sees her own double moments before the automaton – terrifyingly empty-eyed – kills her. The feminising transformation is thus seen in *The Stepford Wives* to signal the destruction rather than the enhancement of or a return to the authentic self; anxieties about the exterior transformation affecting the interior, present in so many Hollywood films and warded off by the 'true self' notion, here coalesce in a product of the horror genre, hinting that there may indeed be nothing behind the mask and that the self is destroyed in being altered.

7) Amelioration

The final thematic trope which appears with regularity during the filmic transformation is that of amelioration. Here the height of glamour attained by the woman during her radical metamorphosis proves untenable or inappropriate in her day-to-day life. Not forgetting the lessons that the transformation has taught her about bringing out her true self and dressing in a more feminine and artful way, the woman nevertheless modifies the magnificence of her new wardrobe to make it more appropriate for the everyday. In *Miss Congeniality* (2000), for example, Gracie Hart does not maintain pageant levels of glamour once she goes back to ordinary cop life, but nor does she return to her old slovenly ways of dressing and behaving. She has learnt how important attractive self-presentation is if you want to get a boyfriend. It can be noted also that the film's sequel shows Gracie loses her edge as a FBI officer because of her new commitment to glamour. In

Miss Congeniality 2 (2005), instead of actively pursuing detective work in the field, she becomes a public relations officer for the FBI, endlessly giving interviews, appearing on chat shows and having her photograph taken; these more passive tasks require less activity on her part but a concomitant increase of attention to her appearance. Although the movie's trailer relates that 'this cover girl … is going back under cover', there is still an emphasis, even when she does become more active, on 'playing dress up', as the plot exigencies take her first into disguise and then to Las Vegas to don a showgirl outfit.

The House Bunny (2008) presents several metamorphoses, shifting along a sliding scale of glamour; our heroine, Shelley (Anna Faris) is a Playboy Bunny, tricked into leaving the Mansion by a jealous rival. She finds a sorority house at a nearby university and is made house mother. Her task then becomes transforming the young women of Zeta House into more popular versions of themselves, via a makeover which metamorphoses them from geeks to babes. The sorority women find themselves no longer 'the Unhot', as they had been before, but 'smoking'; they also eventually find their own new and constant attention to surface details of appearance makes them superficial and quick to judge others by the same shallow standards they themselves were so recently being held as failing to meet. The Zeta women then ameliorate the overly provocative outfits and makeup schemes Shelley had helped them achieve, toning this down to a more everyday level of attractiveness with less overt sexualisation. Notably, they also go to work on Shelley too; just as she had transformed them into variations of herself, they now make her nerdy, putting her hair in a bun and giving her a pair of spectacles to make her seem more intellectual. Both these sartorial masquerades, it should be noted, are in order to attract male attention.

Now Voyager also highlights the necessity for the heroine to find a level of glamour with which she is comfortable. Charlotte begins the film dumpy and overweight, clad in unflattering clothes – voluminous knee-length dresses, thick stockings and clumpy shoes, heavy glasses over her heavily browed eyes, with hair in a lifeless and heavy bun – which age her and make her look more like her mother's younger sister than youngest child. Setting out on her recuperative cruise, Charlotte Vale is encouraged to take the name, cabin and wardrobe of glamorous 'Renée Beauchamp'.

The cruise acts as an opportunity for the woman to emerge from her previous drab persona; caterpillar-like, she sloughs off the old Charlotte and emerges in Renée's borrowed finery, an advance the film makes overt when it has her don an evening cloak with embroidered butterflies across the shoulder.

Charlotte borrows Renée's garments on her cruise-holiday, but when she returns to her home in Boston, although she does not revert to the old-fashioned frumpy garments she had worn previously, she does tone down the glamour of her outfits. The evening dress worn under the fritillary cloak, for example, is a shining white, sleeveless column of a dress with diamond clips; her first evening dress worn at home by contrast is long-sleeved and black, more full in the skirt; although her mother finds this dress unacceptable, it is toned down in glamour compared to the white one worn to dinner with Jerry (Paul Henreid) on the boat. After her romance with Jerry and return home, Charlotte finds and maintains her own level of glamour and femininity in her dress, several steps up from the shapeless frumpy outfits she wore before her breakdown, but also a few down from the glittering allure of Renée's shipboard wardrobe.

Charlotte thus goes from borrowed finery at the height of glamour on the cruise, to a more restrained everyday wardrobe which retains its chic, but also speaks to elements of her persona and history. For example, later in the film Charlotte meets an eligible man, Elliot (John Loder) and is engaged to be married to him but then encounters Jerry again and realises she will only ever truly love him. When breaking off her engagement to Elliot, Charlotte wears a flattering tight black day dress which is reminiscent of many items in her wardrobe; this one, uniquely, however, is patterned with palm trees, leaves and flowers. This visually hints at the reason Charlotte cannot marry Elliot (because she remembers the romantic idyll she and Jerry enjoyed in exotic Panama, where palm trees and luxurious flowers formed their backdrop) while the phallic nature of the palm tree pattern and the explosive, orgasmic starbursts of the flowers symbolically underline the passion so evident in her relationship with Jerry and missing in that with Elliot.

While films which feature the transformation motif frequently work to show the specific wardrobe choices foisted on the central female are not entirely right for her, and that she must find her own way to a comfortable

level of attractiveness, none of the transformation stories examined portrayed the metamorphosis as something to be entirely sloughed off or reversed. This is significant in underlining the central message of the transformations: it is a woman's duty to herself to look her best, and this best is generally achieved through buying and wearing nice goods. Thus no story seems to narrativise backsliding from couture to bargain-basement clothing; although the heights of glamour are often attained by the application of high-end labels and these heights are shown to be too rarefied for the heroine to maintain, when she tones down her look it does not result in a complete reversal back to the inadequate point from which she started. All the women in the three case studies of this book ameliorate the extremity of the glamorous femininity they attain at their film's high point, but do not slip back to their original unfashionable selves.

Having explored here the frequent recurrence of thematic tropes in Hollywood films dealing with the self-alteration story, the remaining section investigates the habitual use also of visual tropes. Hollywood films choose not only to *tell* their metamorphosis narratives in the same way: they use the same tools to *show* them in the same ways too, as will now be considered.

8) Visual tropes

Single White Female contains the first visual trope we will examine here, which is the use of the staircase to display the transformation. As noted, Hedy appears at the top of the stairs in the beauty salon with her hair cut and coloured to look like Alison's; she pauses at the top of the stairs, smiling, before descending. The motif of the staircase and descent occurs sufficiently frequently alongside the transformation for us to ponder its meaning. The staircase, as Mary Ann Doane has pointed out (1987), is a potent symbol within Hollywood cinema and is habitually associated with the display of the female:

> An icon of crucial and repetitive insistence in the classical representations of the cinema, the staircase is traditionally the locus of the spectacularization of the woman. It is *on the stairway* that she is displayed as spectacle for the male gaze … (136) (Italics in the original)

In the 'paranoid woman's films' which Doane investigates, the staircase is also the path to the danger that besets the central female. Thomas

Elsaesser (1987) finds the staircase used as a staging place for action throughout American melodrama since its structure permits movement through the family home and this up-and-down motion accords well with the ascending hopes and crushing disappointments found in the genre (60).

Similarly, in an interesting chapter on the use of the staircase motif in Hitchcock films, Michael Walker (2006) notes that the director often eschews the more obvious symbolism of the stairs (ascent = aspiration = good, descent = resignation = bad) in order to use the architectural feature 'as an aspect of the landscape of the mind' (351). In Hitchcock films, as in both the gothic and domestic noir films studied by Doane, threats can lurk at either end of the staircase. In this way, the staircase exists at a more basic level as emblematic of *motion*, as a liminal place symbolising progress from one place or state to another and, therefore, symbolising change. The stairs are hence the most appropriate place for the transformation to display the completed metamorphosis as they themselves signify movement between positions, statuses. Fascinatingly also Walker cites an insight about the intimate connection between the female star and the staircase motif:

> Another familiar use of the staircase … is as a setting for the female star to make a (usually) impressive star (and/or social) entrance, descending to be greeted by her admirers at the foot of the stairs. In the BBC series, Architecture of the Imagination … the psychologist James Hillman described this feature of Hollywood films as 'like a mythical moment: it's not just the descent of the film's main actress, it's the descent of Aphrodite or Venus into our human world … Heaven has opened up, and she's come down'. (BBC 2, tx 6/8/1993) (352)

This moment of apotheosis has amplified significance for the transformation. The transformed female within the narrative feels like a princess, a model, a star; equally the actress feels herself admitted to the pantheon of other goddesses by being permitted a grand entrance. The motif thus perpetuates itself as *the* mode of enshrining the female star, since both diegetically and extra-diegetically the descent is taken to indicate transcendence.

Interestingly, since so often the transformation acts to improve the woman's social position, it is rare to find the transformation symbolised by the act of climbing stairs; though status elevation would fit with the elevation of the body through ascending the stairs, this matching is not

used. Instead, when stairs are used as a motif to display the achieved metamorphosis, it is for a descent that the staircase is featured. Hedy descends towards Allie in *Single White Female*; Maggie descends the stairs having been made-over from druggie murderess to groomed hired killer in *The Assassin/Point Of No Return*. In that instance, as noted in the Introduction, Maggie's ascent of the stairs to Amanda's studio signifies her willingness to change and become the externally refined young woman her bosses desire her to seem. When she then descends the stairs, the dichotomy between her previous and current posture and costume (thick boots, clumping footsteps/dainty high heels, graceful movement) underlines the 'before' and 'after' of her persona-alteration.

Now Voyager, as also noted previously, similarly uses the staircase as a locus of gauging the status of its heroine. At the beginning of the film, when Charlotte is unhappy because of her poor relationship with her domineering mother, she is overweight and dresses in a style much older than her actual years. Her reluctant arrival at the tea party which will introduce her to Dr Jacquith has her halt on the stairs and pose there – seen only to the calf at first – while she overhears her mother being unkind about her. The significance of this halt on the stairs is that it provides an opportunity for the distance between the before and after of the transformation to be measured: when she has later become the elegant 'Renée Beauchamp' on the cruise which is part of her cure, Charlotte is again viewed by the camera poised at the top of an elevation (this time a gangplank). Furthermore, stairs continue to play an important part in the film after this transformation: though outwardly altered, Charlotte still remains unhappy and unconfident because of her mother and suffers a relapse when the latter dies. She returns to Dr Jacquith's sanatorium and is just about to go up the stairs to her room when she sees a little girl crying in another chamber – this is her lover's daughter, Tina, and Charlotte stops thinking about her own woes to care for the child. Poised at the foot of the steps prior to moving between one place and another echoes Charlotte's psychological position between one state (unhealthy) and the better one to which she aspires. Finally, at the end of the film when Charlotte has helped Tina to overcome *her* shyness and depression, Tina descends the staircase at Charlotte's home to meet her father. As he embraces his child, his eyes rise to Charlotte as she too slowly descends;

Single White Female and the Stairs motif

while he holds one, and looks at the other, he speaks to both as he says the healing words, 'I love you'.

As other authors have noted (Studlar, 2000; Moseley, 2003), Audrey Hepburn's star persona is one which seems particularly linked to notions of self-transformation through costume and to the Cinderella story. It is unsurprising, therefore, to find the staircase being used as the symbol of changing or already-altered status in films with the star, including *Funny Face* and *My Fair Lady* (1964). Other movie musicals made use of the visual trope also; it can be seen in the Harmonia Gardens scene in *Hello,*

Dolly! (1969) during the eponymous number: Dolly Levi, the widowed matchmaker, here reveals herself transformed – or, with the 'true self' motif in mind, recreated – as a glamorous and ardent woman in a décolleté gown. As the waiters at the restaurant hear about her arrival and cluster expectantly at the foot of the grand staircase, one notices her entrance and announces 'She's here!' The camera pans slowly up the stairs to where Dolly waits. She holds the pose for a long moment for all viewers, both diegetic and extra-diegetic, to regard her, then begins her descent to the opening bars of the musical's key song.

Staircases feature in the transformation so regularly that their usage can attract parody. In the teen romcom take on the Pygmalion story, *She's All That*, the transformed Laney descends the stairs to where a pair of admiring men – her brother and boyfriend-to-be – await her; again the camera focuses on her legs as she comes down the stairs, a focus which both highlights the motion between states of before and after, unwanted and desirable, and simultaneously fetishises her limbs as they are showcased by the wedge heels below and short red dress above. *Not Another Teen Movie* satirises this moment precisely when it replays the scene almost shot for shot; even its comic effect of having 'Janey' trip and fall *through* the stairs is only a humorous exaggeration of the original, in which Laney does trip and fall at the bottom of the stairs because she is so unused to heels.

The use of stairs themselves as a stage for the exhibition of the successful transformation carries more than symbolic weight, however; it is also linked with the fashion industry. Lucille was a London couturier of the 1890s who designed costumes for theatrical productions and whose fashion empire spread to include branches in Paris, New York and Chicago. Using legitimate theatre to advertise her designs, she also theatricalised her showrooms and claimed to be the first to use live models or 'mannequins'. While this has been disputed (Kaplan and Stowell, 1994: 116), her invention of the model's runway – the catwalk – is not in doubt:

> In or about 1900 Lucille's drive to theatricalise fashion marketing was made literal with the building of a ramp and curtained recess at one end of her shop. Here, picked out by limelight and accompanied by the playing of soft music, the most accomplished of her mannequins introduced gowns to small groups of invited clients. The resulting mannequin parades, forerunners of

> the contemporary fashion show, were innovations of which Lucille could be justly proud. (Kaplan and Stowell: 117)

Significantly, Lucille later worked designing costumes for the Ziegfeld Follies on Broadway and these shows were also famous for their stately parade of costumed women descending elaborate ramps and staircases (Dyer 1992: 70). While Lucille's use of a ramp in her couture shows differs from the stairs found in the filmic transformations, it is easy to see the link between the two and to find from early cinema onwards the overt use of the catwalk and fashion parade in films. In her chapter in 1990's *Fabrications*, '"Powder Puff" Promotion: The Fashion Show-in-the-Film', Charlotte Herzog observes that including fashion shows within the diegesis of a film occurred frequently in the 1930s and that these segments worked to foreground the clothes on show by a variety of means. Herzog discusses *Roberta* (1935), set in a fashion house, which features several fashion scenes where the main narrative action halts for the audience to scrutinise and enjoy the clothes on show. *Roberta*, furthermore, features a staircase moment when the couturier, Stephanie, stages a fashion show, using herself as the model for the most elaborate gown, which she wears descending a staircase *and* singing, all for the admiring and loving gaze of her partner.

These films which foreground modelling and fashion also highlight the link between the visual motif of the staircase and another which is often found accompanying it in the films showing transformations: what I call 'the catwalk moment'. This is an instance where the progress of the narrative halts for a second or so as the recipient of the metamorphosis pauses both to show off the changes and to receive exclamations of praise and astonishment from her audience. Like the staircase motif, it allows a moment of deification to the newly transformed female: she has changed from being faulty woman to perfect goddess.

Often in the catwalk moment the staircase is still employed as the emblem of changed status, although the altered woman does not move down the steps but holds her pose at the top of them. The catwalk moment exists in this moment of stasis and it is this rather than the descent which captures the eye of the camera and, significantly, the man whom the heroine wishes to attract. This variation on the descent occurs very frequently also and is found recurring in Hollywood films, from 1921's *Forbidden Fruit* to 2007's *Enchanted*: in both scenes the transformed heroine

pauses at the top of the stairs and arrests the attention of the man with whom she is fated to be paired. Hedy's catwalk moment similarly occurs as she pauses at the top of the stairs in the salon; smiling insistently, she poses for Allie to take in the extent of her alteration before descending to meet her. The catwalk moment grants the transformer the attention of the camera, the other characters, and the audience, isolating the moment not of change but of the appreciation of its magnitude in order to stress its importance. As noted, the landing above the stairs often acts as a suitable stage for this moment; frequently, even if stairs do not feature, some sort of elevation is employed in order for the transformed woman to be raised up above her audience. This is not merely so that she can be more easily seen and marvelled over, but also to emphasise her elevation over those who have not undergone a transformative experience. The catwalk moment that comes in *Gold Diggers of 1935* at the end of the shopping sequence places Ann Prentiss in her ultimate purchases of couture gown, fan and diamonds amongst but high above the boxes and packages which contain the rest of her haul, as well as above the worshipping Dick.

Musical numbers again provide the opportunities to showcase the catwalk moment which celebrates the success of the transformation. In *Hairspray*, after Edna's transformation, it is Tracy's turn for a metamorphosis; while Edna continues to dance about, Tracy is whisked away down a path of attendants who then form a line concealing her. Each peels off, alternately to the left and right, until, as the music builds to a pinnacle, Tracy is finally revealed, now with a pink sequinned dress that matches her mother's. Just as the music does, she also pauses for a second with her hands outstretched in a ta-da! gesture and Edna gasps appreciatively. Similarly, with the *Hello, Dolly!* number, Dolly's catwalk moment exists at the top of the stairs in the hush and pause before she begins to descend and the orchestra starts its grand vamp into the song.

The significance of the catwalk moment lies in what it suggests to the audience about the importance of self-improvement. By using the visual effects of cinema – close-ups, camera panning – films which use this motif stage a scene in which the full weight of the transformation is felt. The woman transformed can stop the music, she can stop traffic, she can stop the narrative flow: the stasis often accompanied by a pause in the soundtrack highlights her power to command all eyes and ears. Since

narratively it is often ordinary women, rather than models and princesses, who are granted this moment of supreme audience attention, the catwalk moment can be seen as permitting Everywoman to become the epitome of glamour for an instant. Interestingly, this visual filmic trope, along with the linked motif of the staircase, has become so much part of the language of the transformation that it has been co-opted into makeover television wholesale. In *Extreme Makeover* (2002–2005), 'the big reveal' of the metamorphosis is staged at a grand party: the changed person appears at the top of a flight of stairs and holds the moment to the gasps of the audience before descending to be reunited with them.

These two visual tropes for marking the successful metamorphosis are, as will have been noted, ones of mise-en-scene and staging; the other two elements which recur in highlighting the transformation involve the camera. Again also, just as the staircase and catwalk moment motifs are frequently linked, the remaining two visual tropes can also be found accompanying them. The first of these is a particular look of the camera, a pan up the body; the second is the use of slow-motion.

We have seen the particular look I am identifying as a recurrent visual trope of the transformation before, in both *Grease* and *Moonstruck*. In the former, it comes in the scene where the made-over Sandy strides through the crowd to meet the astonished gaze of the T-Bird boys. As viewers, we watch the three boys react in turn to an amazing sight, before the next shot reproduces their viewpoint and shows us Sandy – starting at her red peep-toe sandals and rising up her black satin legs to her leather-jacketed torso, newly curled hair, red lips and nails. Her whole transformed body – newly visible, in its tight clothing – is shown off in a single fluid motion of the camera which reproduces the feeling of a captivated bystander 'giving her the once over'. This look is again used to confirm the successful transformation of Loretta in *Moonstruck*: although the audience has seen Loretta accumulate the various portions of her outfit for her opera date, and witnessed her visit to the beauty salon, it has not seen the complete effect these new garments and styling produce before she turns up to meet Ronny at the opera. As she emerges from a taxi, however, the camera gives her that swift upward sweeping glance, beginning with her scarlet high-heeled shoe and carrying on up her body in appreciation.

The shot which showcases the body of the woman is obviously not restricted to the filmed transformation, but is very common.[5] One notable occurrence is when it acts to introduce the character of femme fatale Cora (Lana Turner) in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946); in a series of 13 shots, the camera reproduces the ocular interactions of the pair who will go on to become lovers and murderers. Firstly the camera gives the audience the look of the central male character, Frank (John Garfield) as he notices first a lipstick roll near his feet, and then the lipstick's owner, as she asks him to return the item. The camera sweeps up Cora's body, revealing as it reaches them in turns her shoes, ankles and legs up to the knee. However, it is very noticeable that in the first shot of Cora, which seems to link to the transformation swooping look, the shot stops at her shapely knees and then cuts to Frank's reaction. Unlike the swooping camera pan, which shows the woman in her metamorphosed state in her entirety, coherent and total, here the film is edited to cut her up into different sections. After the reaction shot of Frank gasping at Cora's appearance before him, we return to look at her again but do not continue the progress up her body but now see her full-figure framed in a doorway. A few shots later there is a tight close-up of her face. *The Postman* sequence does not follow the pattern of the filmic transformation in making the materialisation of the metamorphosed character the central focus of the shot through its attention to all details in one coherent sweep, but allows the camera to dwell in fetishistic pleasure on parts of Cora's body, cut up and dislocated from each other in the filmic space. The transformation's swooping look, by contrast, allows for the presentation of the unified body, in order to reveal the full extent of the alterations in one coherent exposure and attesting the woman's new sense of wholeness, in having an exterior which finally matches her interior true self.

This partial, cut up, treatment of the woman's body, as shown in *The Postman…* can be contrasted with the usage of the swooping camera pan in *Now Voyager*.[6] Charlotte pauses on the stairs before the first meeting with Dr Jacquith, on hearing her mother talk about her. At this point in the film, the camera shows us her descending legs, up to the calf, but does not follow the swoop up to the rest of her body; this hiatus underlines the fact that, at this point, Charlotte is unhappy. The interruption of the shot's completion illustrates her misery. When she comes down the ship's

Hairspray and the Catwalk moment

gangplank, in the sequence which visually rhymes with the first one, again the camera focuses on her legs as she pauses at the top of the gangplank but this time completes the sweep up her whole body. Now this sense of freedom, of completion, corresponds with the progress Charlotte has made psychologically: her unblocking emotionally is echoed by the unblocking of the camera's unfettered sweep.

Thoroughly Modern Millie also uses 'the look', and again makes its appearance, signalling approval and achievement of the successful transformation, chime with an earlier look of dismay. Millie compares her Edwardian outfit to the up-to-the-minute flapper garb of the other women passing her on the busy New York street. The camera follows and then reproduces her gaze as her head tilts to look down at her own body and outfit. This downward swoop marks her realisation that her costume does not fit with contemporary fashions. Striding determinedly into the convenient Jazz Rags Dress Shoppe, she emerges through a time-eliding edit seconds later clad in the latest mode. Now the camera, placed outside the shop doorway, starts at her fashionable pointed shoes and moves up her body to her smiling face, employing that fluid sweep that signals the triumphant transformation. The upward motion of the camera answers the

previous downward look, but while the former connoted disappointment, awareness of not fitting in, this upward swoop affirms Millie's successful application of money to the problem, her triumphant consumerism elevating her to the ranks of stylish women around her – until she realises the next new thing she needs to buy. We can note too that the initial downward look of disappointment is presented as Millie's own point of view, while the answering upward glance of approval, by contrast, seems to come from outside her, illustrating how the ideal consumer perceives a purchasing success as others' looks of approbation.

Similarly, *Hello, Dolly!* uses the same sinuous camera pan to move up the grand staircase and Dolly Levi's body simultaneously, the look reproducing the ardent gaze of the admiring body of men waiting at the bottom of the staircase. In many of these instances of the transformation being confirmed by 'the look', the camera movement evokes the toe-to-top assessing of the woman's body by a male viewer. At the end of Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, however, the look floats free of male agency; here the now-familiar pan up the woman's body is integrated more elegantly into the scene since it seems to answer a preceding movement over the body of a man. The camera's viewpoint roams *down* the damaged body of Jeff (James Stewart), revealing he now has *two* broken legs, before swooping *up* the body of Lisa (Grace Kelly), now clad not in haute couture as was her custom but ready for action in loafers and jeans, topped with a practical shirt. The camera's caressing progress up Lisa's body reveals its coverings transformed but, the film slyly assures us, this does not confirm that the woman inside is internally altered, since her preferred reading matter is still *Harper's Bazaar* rather than a travel book.

In two other film transformations where we find this look, unusually replicating a female point of view, the technique is used not to affirm the successful metamorphosis but to signal its need. In *Clueless,* Tai's first appearance at Cher's high school introduces her to her female classmates during tennis lessons. Clad in her grungy slacker garb, Tai is subject to the critical looks of her peers: here the sweeping pan of the camera implies not the alteration but its necessity. As Amber, a bitchy classmate, compares Tai to a farmer in her checked shirt and baggy brown trousers, we see Cher looking at the newcomer and the next shot, giving the camera's slow scrutiny of her clothes as it travels in its smooth arc up from her feet to

face replicates Cher's sympathetic appraisal of the girl: 'She is so adorably *clueless*!' Cher's gaze, which the camera pan conveys here, delivers her evaluation of Tai's need for metamorphosis if she is to blend in with the other students, and motivates the next scene, where the change is accomplished.

In a similar fashion, the camera's feet-to-head appraisal of another woman in *The Major and the Minor* indicates the occasion for, rather than the completion of, the transformation: despairing of travelling without sufficient money to pay for her fare, Susan Applegate sees a young girl being bought a half-price ticket. Camera and performance together suggest the dawning of her idea: as Susan walks away from the ticket counter her body moves but her head remains riveted in the direction of the girl; the reverse shot, when it comes, implies Susan's own gaze at the child and travels up her body from her flat shoes, bare legs, short skirt and plaits. Another reverse shot to Susan's face shows her eyes flicker to the right as if getting the idea for the imposture. Here the sweep up the body shot is detached from the approval element that often accompanies it: Susan is not looking the girl 'up and down' in a prurient way but an appraising one, pondering if she could resemble her given the right clothes. Her look is more akin to Millie's at the other fashionable women on the streets of New York, comparing herself to another and calculating her own deficiencies, rather than the salacious stare at an attractive woman by men which the look in *Grease* imitates.

The final visual trope to consider is rarer than the other three but nonetheless often occurs to mark off the moment of revelation; this is the use of slow-motion camerawork. Although known in silent cinema, slow-mo has been more regularly used since the late 1960s; Stephen Farber, in a 1969 review of *The Wild Bunch*, notes its use of 'very contemporary tricks of film-making', including slow-motion (2). The use of slow-motion, often in descending the stairs, is found already feeling like a quotation in *She's Out of Control* (1989), a decade before *She's All That* and its close parody, *Not Another Teen Movie*; the scenes where the transformation of Laney/Janey from grungy bespectacled artist to glamorous babe are unveiled occurs using all the above-mentioned visual motifs, stairs, catwalk moment and camera-pan 'look', as well as a dreamily romantic tune, 'Kiss Me', on the soundtrack in both instances. The young woman descends down the staircase, halts for

her catwalk moment to receive the adulation of her assembled males, then proceeds in slow-mo as 'the look' pans up her body. The film-makers responsible for the spoof movie evidently thought these motifs regular enough both to copy and to comment on; while descending, Janey is told by the makeover-designing sister, 'Congratulations, you just got your first slow-motion entrance'.

Miss Congeniality similarly stages its revelation of the transformation of policewoman Gracie Hart (Sandra Bullock): after being worked on all night by beauty professionals, she emerges to greet the disbelieving eyes of her fellow officers both in slow-motion and to the triumphant strutting sounds of 'Mustang Sally'. Here the catwalk moment and the use of slow-motion mingle, as the latter serves to highlight the former, stretching out the scene of Gracie's embodiment of goddess status.

Another use of slow-motion to mark the significance of the transformation occurs in the horror film *Carrie* (1976), when the outcast teenager (Sissy Spacek) suddenly seems, Cinderella-like, to have had her dreams come true. Previously the film has shown Carrie wearing seemingly hand-me-down outfits, oversize skirts and shirts that reinforce the shy little girl persona she presents to the world. Having made herself a sleek pale pink satin gown, however, Carrie's fortunes seem to change: arriving at the prom, she finally receives all the things previously denied her: a handsome prince, a beautiful dress, the approbation of her schoolmates and, to top it all, the award of Prom Queen. As she goes up to the dais to collect her crown, the film employs slow-motion as a way of conveying Carrie's feelings; having never had friends before, and now being acclaimed her schoolmates' queen, makes her feel as if she is living in a fantasy, a state of unreality which the slow-mo aptly conveys. When her dream becomes a nightmare, however, as she realises she has been tricked into standing on the stage directly under a bucket of blood, the slow-motion itself transforms from aptly conveying the sense of fairy-tale happiness Carrie had felt to being the appropriate visual medium to connote the horror and eeriness of her unleashed telekinetic powers.

In all four instances of its usage examined here, the slow-motion footage is used to communicate to the viewer the feelings of the transformed woman, her excitement and amazement at her own alteration and her acknowledgement of the approving looks of those around her.

This section has set out to show that both the stories about transformations, and the ways of staging and presenting these stories, frequently recur within Hollywood cinema, and to suggest some of the reasons why this might be so. The recurrences stretch from the macro – the Galatea, Cinderella and self-determining female storylines, predicated on whose agency advances the change – to the very micro – the constant repetition of the motif of shaggy eyebrows needing grooming[7] – taking in the repeated thematic and visual tropes and elements explored above. It is now time to move on and see these various motifs and themes in action, explored in detail in films which have been set in their precise historical contexts.

section three:

| Case Studies |

Having explored the visual and thematic tropes which operate within the filmic transformation via a range of brief examples, it is now time to investigate them in more detail. The texts in this section – *The Bride Wore Red* (1937), *Calamity Jane* (1953) and *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) – have been chosen because they present intriguing instances of the metamorphosis at work, offering opportunities to see the transformation relating to its particular cultural and historical contexts in interesting ways while still displaying the dominant elements which recur in these films. These case studies thus both relate to their immediate times and show the continuity of presentation which marks, to me, one of the film-based transformations' most noticeable features.

Of the films which will be examined, the first two, from the thirties and fifties, are easiest to set in their immediate historical contexts; the most recent is still too close to be able to analyse with any detachment. The distance of intervening years is necessary in order to point out the major preoccupations and concerns of any period. On the other hand, we can much more easily recall the topical allusions from recent films. The ideal position would be to capture both the immediacy of the current awareness of a film alongside the long-sighted view leant by historical distance. Lacking this impossibly perfect vantage point, it will be the task of these sections to attempt to recover as much of the historical contiguities as possible.

After a brief plot synopsis each chapter will explore the film's immediate contexts, before considering how the transformation theme is used in the text and what combination of the tropes previously investigated are employed. The sections will survey the particular role of the costumes themselves in accomplishing the transformation, looking not only at style but also fabric and design symbolism. The case studies will be intent to look for the importance of a star's specific persona and connection to costume intersecting with other narrative concerns. Individual costume narratives will be explored, along with whether they endorse or undermine the dominant narrative; sections will also check the possibility of costume forecasting future events – especially the transformation itself – as this contrasts directly with Jane Gaines' declaration that costume 'cannot anticipate narrative developments' (1990: 205). Above all, the investigation of these exemplar texts will seek to show how simultaneously flexible and generic the transformation moment is; flexible in suiting itself to the particular star, narrative and contextual circumstances from which it arises, and generic in regularly employing the same handful of thematic and visual tropes to tell the story of personal transfiguration.

THE BRIDE WORE RED

Synopsis

At a casino with his friend Rudi Pal (Robert Young), Count Armalia (George Zucco) asserts that the only difference between Rudi and the waiter, both men in evening dress, is their societal function – one waits at tables while the other is waited upon. Rudi protests, but the Count insists there is no innate gentility, only external trappings. Later, visiting a waterfront bar, the Count meets Anni (Joan Crawford) and determines to prove his theory at Rudi's expense. He enables Anni to buy clothes, giving her enough money to pose for two weeks as a rich socialite, 'Anne Vivaldi', at the exclusive hotel where Rudi is staying. Anni doubts him until she sees the money, but then determines to take this chance. She visits the couturier, ordering the appropriate clothes and a red beaded evening gown, a long-desired fantasy purchase.

When not met by its car, Anni drives to the hotel with the village postman Giulio (Franchot Tone) in his donkey-cart. Anni discovers her hotel maid is Maria, an old friend who also used to work in the bar. Maria confides that though she now works harder she is much happier – the implication is that *this* is honest work. Maria admires Anni's good fortune and new clothes, apart from the red beaded dress, which she remarks cannot be worn amongst the hotel's high society guests. Anni crossly puts the dress away.

With some of the hotel staff helping her navigate etiquette minefields, Anni meets Rudi, his fiancée Maddelena (Lynne Carver), the Contessa di Meina (Billie Burke) and Maddelena's father Admiral Monti (Reginald Owen). The Contessa instantly suspects Anni of being a gold-digger and warns Maddelena, but she is too much of a lady to intervene and can only watch as Anni vamps Rudi. Giulio simultaneously tries to court Anni. She is both attracted to him and resentful of the danger he presents to her plans; reaching the end of the two weeks paid for by Armalia, Anni decides to stay on to extract a marriage proposal from Rudi.

The suspicious Countess writes to Armalia for information about Anni. This finally arrives by telegram at the post office: the Count confesses his game and Anni's imposture. Giulio reads this but does not mention his new knowledge when Anni visits him. She and Giulio end up in an embrace and the telegram goes undelivered. That evening, the hotel holds a festival where the upper-class guests dress in peasant garb, and both the postman and Rudi propose to Anni there. Although she has only that afternoon kissed him, Anni rejects Giulio to grasp at the financial security Rudi represents.

Anni goes down to dinner on her last night wearing the red beaded dress. She is engaged in brittle conversation with the Contessa when Giulio arrives to deliver the telegram at last; he had waited for Anni to tell Rudi the truth herself. The Contessa reveals the contents of the telegram; Anni, both sarcastic and brave, relieves Rudi of his promise to marry her, urging him to treasure Maddelena. Shunned by the other guests and confronted by the angry hotelier, whom she has not paid, Anni leaves her gowns as compensation and departs with only the clothes on her back, hidden under a floor-length black cloak. As she walks away she meets Giulio in his cart. He renews his offer of marriage; Anni throws off the cloak to reveal she has

kept only the festival dress, knowing this would best suit her future life as a postman's wife.

Contexts

The two dominant, and overlapping, contexts against which to read *The Bride Wore Red* are the Great Depression and Joan Crawford's own career and star persona. It seems significant that while the Great Depression took its toll on jobs, homes, finances, it did not, after an initial downturn, seem to affect attendance at movie theatres, as audiences continued to flock to see their favourite stars. Crawford's stardom in particular received a boost in 1929, the very moment at which so many others suffered; this boost cannot be ascribed to the general good fortune of the movie business at the time, but seems more intimately connected with anxieties and fantasies about wealth and poverty into which her specific star tapped. As Richard Dyer has formulated, a star's persona is the sum of her on-screen roles, off-screen appearances and the mass of extra-filmic information available about her, rather than anything pertaining to her 'real' personality (1979). The star attains prominence when the persona's various connotations have a particular resonance with an audience. Dyer's in-depth exploration of 'when' as well as 'how, what and why' stars mean, *Heavenly Bodies* (1986) explores Marilyn Monroe, produced and consumed in the 1950s as an embodiment of sexuality. Similarly, Crawford's persona, which remained steady whether she was playing shop clerks, showgirls or heiresses, seemingly evoked connotations which chimed with contemporary audiences. Her chief characteristic is energy, sometimes directed into her physical performances when a showgirl and dancer, at others revealing itself as an iron determination to better herself and improve her circumstances. This can shade into ruthlessness in some roles or become a more brooding but passive unhappiness in others. Crawford's energy frequently provides the motor for the narrative's plot; her resolve to get a lover, or a job, or leave either, serving to set the story going. Above all, her robust strength of character seems to be most often directed to bettering herself, climbing out of whatever circumstance fate has cast her into by sheer force of will. The refusal to quit and the energy to keep on plugging away can be seen to be uplifting qualities given the contemporary

circumstances, perhaps accounting for the star's enormous popularity during the period.

Crawford was signed by MGM in 1925 and was granted various minor roles until her first major hit in *Our Dancing Daughters* (1928). Although immediately afterwards she did return to playing more minor roles in three films, the vitality she brought to the part of a jazz-age flapper ensured that she came to the public's notice. Biographers note that this film brought the star a welter of fan mail (Quirk and Schoell 2002: 41); from this point her studio began to bally-hoo her. A full-page advertisement in the June 1929 issue of *Screenland* magazine inaugurates Joan into the MGM 'Hall of Fame of Stardom':

> Now Joan Crawford … the girl of the hour, vibrant with the spirit of youth, enters the roster of 'More Stars Than There Are in Heaven'. You've seen Joan in 'Our Dancing Daughters'. Her great new starring picture will be 'Our Modern Maidens', a sequel to that classic of up-to-date jazz-romance. (112)

While in this role she is comfortably wealthy, she did not always play socialites, but working girls and showgirls as often too.[1] In 1932 alone, for example, she appeared as impoverished stenographer Flaemmchen in *Grand Hotel*, socialite-with-a-past *Letty Lynton*, and prostitute Sadie Thompson in *Rain*. This alternation between wealthy and working-class roles continued throughout both her silent and talking pictures and it is possible that audiences saw no jarring disjunction between Crawford as hard-working office worker in one film and rich socialite in the next. Her narratives generally reward her with the success she strives for, so by the conclusion of many of her working girl roles she has attained wealth and success. In this way it is possible to see her vehicles overall as enshrining the 'before' and 'after' motif of the filmic transformation, as her characters go from offices and department stores to mansions and nightclubs, both *within* specific films and *across* her movies as a whole.

This dominant and repeated narrative trajectory can thus be associated with Crawford's star persona, which itself had been carefully crafted and presented, in studio-sponsored publicity material and stories about her in film and fan magazines, as an analogous rags-to-riches tale. A biographical piece held on file for use in publicity by Warner Brothers after the success of *Mildred Pierce* (1945) pronounced that 'The life story of Joan Crawford

is the real Cinderella story of Hollywood',[2] while a 1942 account of the star's life purportedly written by Crawford herself in *Ladies Home Journal*, 'I Couldn't Ask For More', continues the association:

> It is a little embarrassing for me to write my autobiography. Not that there is anything I'd rather hide, but the events of my life, set down in cold type, make me sound like such an unmitigated Cinderella. (13)

As frequently reported in film and fan magazines, Crawford's obscurity-to-stardom story was couched in terms of fairy tale and fantasy; as Lucille LeSueur she had been spotted dancing in the chorus of a show on Broadway and offered a film contract. She came to Hollywood and, famously, in 1925 her studio launched a competition through the film magazine *Movie Weekly*[3] inviting readers to name the new starlet: 'Joan Crawford' was the eventual winning entry. Perhaps because they had thus not only witnessed her design and construction as a star, but been invited to participate in it, audience members, especially female ones, adopted Crawford as their heroine. It is easy to imagine that the actor could represent to other poor, hard-working women the acme of success to which they could aspire; certainly, this is the story of her working girl films in a nutshell. Not only, though, could such audience members vicariously enjoy success and riches through Crawford herself and the characters she was playing on screen; she could also be utilised as a role model: *Motion Picture Magazine*, dubbed her 'The Most Copied Girl in the World' (May 1937: 30–31).

The Bride Wore Red itself provides a wryly audacious instance of self-reflexivity over this: when Count Armalia, on seeing her eat, asks her 'Where did you get such charming manners?' Crawford's Anni responds 'I go to the movies. I watch the ladies of your world'. Here the film comments overtly on Crawford's position as a star who, her biographies said, had learnt her genteel manners from watching films, and who could be trusted as a role model worth copying. The star was indeed constantly held up by the movie press as being the star that female audience members tried to emulate,[4] significantly for her clothes and accessories as well as her manners.

Joan Crawford's screen persona, biography and many of her roles thus all tapped into the master rags-to-riches narrative. *The Bride Wore Red* can be seen as providing another instance of this tale, although a certain amount of ambivalence inheres in this story about what fate Anni deserves.

While she was associated with these fairy-tale-like narratives, however, Crawford's status as a modern-day Cinderella was not based only on the arc of her rise from obscurity to fame, but also specifically on that rise being both marked and assisted by clothing. Oft-told tales, once she had become an established star, underlined that in her past she had been as impoverished and sartorially challenged as any of her fans (*Silver Screen*, May 1939: 31); Jane Gaines cites a famous story about Crawford, when a struggling actor, being leant fourteen dollars to buy 'something decent to wear' (Gaines and Herzog, 1991: 86).

In confirming Crawford as a 'Cinderella girl', articles and press materials also frequently emphasise that the star has got where she is because of her own determination to work at aspects of her appearance and personality, to improve herself again and again. This concept confirms Crawford as the appropriate star for others to emulate in making self-improvements. One article, 'The Girl You Can Be', in August 1932's issue of *Silver Screen*, utilises this idea and links it to the metamorphosis undergone by the caterpillar:

> Consider the butterfly, who, as a caterpillar, dares to dream of beauty and glory, and intoxicated by such a lovely vision falls asleep and awakes to find itself the most beautiful of living creatures, flying free amid flowers and golden sunshine.
>
> Deep in the soul of every woman is the desire and dream of becoming a beautiful creature. But she must have a vision of what she wants to be, she must be willing to work at it, to build step by step vigilantly and heroically just as Joan Crawford did in turning herself from an ordinarily pretty girl into the flame-like compelling star she is today. (Lee 1932: 44)

Even today, something about Crawford's trajectory as a star, going from flapper to working girl across the silent/talkies divide, inevitably invokes the idea of transformation: contrasting two photographs from Crawford's early career, for example, author Samantha Barbas (2001) uses the 'before' and 'after' phrase which signifies a sartorial metamorphosis.[5]

Press snippets about Joan Crawford during this period (1929–39) repeatedly stressed that she was the most important star to watch and copy for fashion trends. Adrian's 1929 series of style notes for women in *Silver Screen* posed Crawford as the 'future modern maiden' (46), neatly managing

to publicise both the star and her then-current film. Similarly, a gossip item in the September 1934 issue of *Silver Screen* noted:

> Joan Crawford went a-dancing the other night and introduced the latest fashion style – modified hoop skirts for evening wear. She got the idea from several little numbers Adrian ran up for her in 'Chained', and with Joan setting the style it looks like we're going to be hooping it up this fall. If only you and I could wear hoops as beautifully as Joan does. (15)

Here the continued reputation of Crawford as a star who affects fashion choices for keenly appraising fans is attested by the author of 'Topics for Gossips'. A curious inclusiveness is created by the writer with her audience using the star as the embodiment of perfection to which they all, including her, aspire, seemingly with equal hopelessness. The author also assumes her readers know that Crawford is habitually dressed by Adrian, while allowing the star herself some agency in what she wears off screen ('she got the idea …'). A comic article about star copying, 'That Flair for Being Glamorous' appeared in the following month's *Silver Screen* also, in which Crawford heads the list of stars the author attempts to imitate in a humorously fruitless bid to borrow some of her glamour (Wilson, 1934: 16–17, 60–61). And Dorothy Spensely in *Motion Picture*, in May 1937, the year *The Bride Wore Red* was released, enthused:

> She has changed the fashion notion of a nation of women. Even a world of women. From Boston to Budapest to Bali they copy the way Joan Crawford walks, the way she dresses, the way she does her hair – trains her brow – paints her lips. (30)

Eventually this position as what might now be called a fashionista became less welcome to Crawford and she came to feel it a stigma, giving other film personnel a reason to undervalue her. As Robert J. Corber (2006) notes in a recent article on *Mildred Pierce*, the director, Michael Curtiz, was initially very reluctant to cast Crawford in the role as he perceived her solely as a 'clotheshorse' (2), not so much an actor as the mannequin she had played so often in films. During the 1920s and 30s, however, her film roles often overtly played up the importance of costume, with *The Bride Wore Red* a notable, if ambivalent, example. Close examination of the costumes themselves in this film reveals that Adrian, in designing Crawford's wardrobe, was following the usual industry pattern

of imbuing the clothes with hints about the character wearing them. The film's dominant narrative trajectory transports its main character from waterfront dive to mountain resort, but the costumes tell us how she accomplishes this journey, and how she feels while making it, as it takes her from bitter working girl to happy wife via a nebulous (and fascinating) period of self-loathing as an adventuress, summed up and epitomised in the movie's design tour de force – the red beaded dress invoked in its title.

Influences

The Bride Wore Red owes something to both the Pygmalion and Cinderella stories, but also represents our first thorough exposure to the type of self-determining female who acts decisively to change her life when circumstances permit her, which seems to have been invented by Hollywood. Count Armalia can be seen as a partial Pygmalion, especially reminiscent of Professor Higgins when he undertakes to 'improve' Anni for a wager against a friend. However, it is significant that in this case the friend does not know about the wager, and it is this gap which permits the possibility of a cross-class romance, since the story makes it very clear that Rudi would not be interested in marrying Anni knowing her real status. Having set up the machinery for the transformation, however, Armalia himself vanishes from the story, and it goes on without him, to dwell much more on the results of his game with fate for the woman he involves in it. Armalia, therefore can also be understood as a kind of Fairy Godmother, although his motives are not entirely benevolent and, as considered later, there is also reason to see the postman Giulio taking on this role.

Whoever adopts the Fairy Godmother persona, the film is fully aware both of its own reflection of the Cinderella tale and the frequent references to the fairy story in publicity material commenting on Crawford's stardom: attending Anni before the feste, Maria, the maid, comments that she is 'busy, getting Cinderella ready for the ball'. In a significant diversion from the original Cinderella story, however, Anni is seen not to be entirely deserving of the high status her masquerade permits her – for a short time – to enjoy.

Indeed, Anni is by far the most complex character in the film, as befits a star vehicle, although she also is a character with a past, which perhaps

does not so neatly accord with what her studios wanted for Joan Crawford. According to Judith Mayne (1994: 74), the original unpublished play by Ferenc Molnar, the source for the film, clearly showed Anni to be a prostitute; while the film version makes her a singer in a bar instead, there are no implications that Anni has managed to remain pure in this environment, and her friend Marie's confession that she is happier working all hours as a chamber maid at the hotel because, though back-breaking, the toil is 'honest', acts as confirmation of this elided plot point. The film cannot seem to make up its mind whether Anni is a grasping gold-digger or a poor girl who is smart enough to make a grab for what she wants when she gets the opportunity. This ambivalence is never resolved by the narrative, and is one of the factors that render it such an interesting, if ambiguous text. Certainly, while overall its narrative trajectory does fit that expected of the contemporary Crawford vehicle, acting as a rags-to-riches Cinderella story, it also brings out the dominant personality of its heroine; she, rather than Armalia, is responsible for her transformation, although he gives her the idea, the alias and the money. This reinforces the film as a fitting vehicle for Crawford, in whom the determination to get ahead and improve herself was recognised as a defining characteristic. As one fan noted in a letter to *Photoplay* 'She had no one to help her, but her own perseverance and persistence has made her the lovely, poised, graceful, cultured woman she is today' (October 1932: 19). Just as Crawford herself was seen to possess the drive and determination to change her circumstances, Anni has the will, as well as the wit to realise that she will stay in the dive if she has manners – and clothes – that mark her as belonging there.

Costume reading

The Bride Wore Red begins with a visual image which foretells the central character's endpoint in the film and thus rather confounds ideas about narrative suspense. Very much against Jane Gaines' pronouncement that 'costume cannot anticipate narrative', the opening image of the film does just that. The credits play out over a music box which slowly turns as a tune plays. The music box base is painted with scenes of hills and mountains, railway tracks and villages, and provides the setting of the story's action.

Above this are more mountains, and towering above these is the outsize figure of a woman, evidently modelled on Joan Crawford, who stands with her hands on her hips looking both haughty and vital. The model is dressed in 'peasant dress': she wears a tightly-laced black bodice over a white puffy-sleeved blouse, both cut to enhance her very full and jutting bust. Her skirt is flowery underneath a white apron and she has a crown of flowers in her hair. From this Heidi-like appearance one could imagine the film's heroine to be an alpine milkmaid; rather than portray the Crawford character as she is at the beginning of the film, this music box figure portrays her at its end, and it is thus a surprise to find her at the film's start in 'the lowest dive in Trieste'. The credits leave the viewer with the very powerful image of Crawford dominating the mountain, and wondering how this will be worked into the story.

If the narrative trajectory of *The Bride Wore Red* thus works to take Crawford's character Anni from sin-soaked waterside dive to innocent mountain village, the costume arc reinforces that her journey is not only

The Bride Wore Red 1: The music box figure

geographical and sartorial, but also spiritual. Here her 'before' and 'after' consist of a cheap shiny black gown, contrasted with a peasant girl's fiesta outfit. Although these outfits provide a strong contrast to each other, there is a hint in the former, the very first costume we see the live Anni wearing, that she will end in the peasant garb the music box sequence foretold. This is the detail of the corsage of roses and leaves she wears pinned to the shoulder of her evening gown. Amid the bar's gloomy interior, and the tawdry attempt at glamour that Anni's shiny gown represents, the flowers are the only natural detail, and, as they are light-coloured, attract the eye by contrast with the black satin to which they are fixed. Pinned next to Anni's shoulder, they stand out against the dark fabric of her dress but echo her pale skin, itself shown off by the dress, low cut and sleeveless, although there is no attempt at suggesting a cleavage; Anni's bra-less state makes her seem flat-chested, especially in comparison to the model on the music box. While the film's initial costume for Anni confirms that she is a 'showgirl' of sorts – a Code-era euphemism for prostitute – through its display of flesh, it also hints at the tension within the woman,

The Bride Wore Red 2: Anni's dress in the Trieste bar

through its contrast of shiny satin and pale flowers. The flowers indicate both her love of nature, which the film will make much of later, and, through their unexpected presence on her dress, her discontent with her surroundings.

Crawford's key persona element of energy here fuels the bitterness inside Anni; as she is introduced to the Count who buys her dinner, her boss obviously feels she should be grateful, but Anni is too sardonic for a subservient role. Although Armalia treats her to dinner, she does not treat him deferentially. The flowers on her dress thus come to indicate Anni's wish for escape from the bar and from her lowly position there. In the opening scene they serve both to point towards her eventual discovery of peace of mind amid the mountains, and her initial feelings of frustration with her own position in the bar, having to reveal her flesh and sing her bitter song – 'Who needs love?' The contrast between the natural pale flowers and cheap-seeming black dress of shiny satin thus sets up a series of resonances which inform Anni's character and hint at the trajectory she will travel during the narrative.

The costume following the initial black dress further implies elements of Anni's character and her future: this is the little day dress which she wears to visit 'Galli, Casa de Moda', the dress shop where Armalia sends her. Crawford's performance in this scene is designed to show her character at first tentative, feeling out of place and unworthy, but then growing in confidence until she can call out her desires with authoritative voice and glowing face.

Anni approaches the shop warily and stares for a time at a coat with an elaborate fur collar in the shop window. Her behaviour suggests that she still believes Armalia's promises to be a game and fears she will be unwelcome at the stylish store. The costume supports this performance by further suggesting Anni's initial feelings on entering Galli. She has obviously dressed herself in the best outfit her meagre wardrobe can supply, to seem respectable and to give herself the confidence she needs just to enter. The dress is made of a plain fabric, white polka dots on a dark background, with white rickrack adorning its square neckline and sleeves. It falls to mid-calf, and reveals shapely ankles and high-heeled black shoes. Anni initially clutches her little black bag to herself with nerves, and wears a black beret. Her accessories are minimal and dark, designed for

function and to be understated. As Sarah Berry (2000: 37) comments, the square-neckline of this dress forecasts that on the peasant dress Anni wears for the peasant festival; importantly, however, this is not the 'initial' (35) outfit in which we see Anni; instead it signifies a substantial step up in respectability from the first gown she actually wears. Taking the woman from this plain day dress to the peasant gown would evoke a journey from an attempted urban sophistication to rural innocence, perhaps, but Anni's path is a more complex one.

The other significant point of this scene is the clothes Anni orders. Growing in confidence as she finds the elegant shop woman will wait on her, Anni at first asks hesitatingly if she may have 'the blue coat in the window', but then, when the woman complies, calls after her, 'And I shall want a red evening gown … with beads!' This is the first mention of the dress which gives the film its title and which will act as a complex symbol within the film.

By the following scene, the heroine's sartorial transformation has taken place: she arrives at the resort railway station in her new finery, the blue coat and its matching hat. Anni's coat is accessorised with a turban-like hat, seemingly in the same fabric, and bag. Although the cloth that makes up these items is not mentioned, it seems to be rich enough to support the lavish fur trimmings and to have some pile of its own, like velvet. When Anni arrives at the hotel she takes off her coat and reveals a day dress of softly draping material underneath, presumably in the same blue. The significance of this ensemble within the film and the costume narrative is its very richness, both of fabric and cost. The outfit symbolises money; it is in full contrast to Anni's first outfit, the expensive tactility of these garments fully opposing the slick and flimsy satin of the bar gown. The ensemble also suits Anni, she looks good as a 'lady', and yet while the expensive fabrics seem to establish her as a wealthy woman, miles out of the league of the town postman who takes her up to the hotel in his donkey-cart, the velvet of his jacket chimes with the softness of her coat to suggest they could form a couple.

The costume which Anni next dons, for her first evening dining at the hotel, is endowed with important symbolic resonance: it acts as the antithesis of the red gown which she will wear later, anticipating her marriage. Here the dress, worn while she is still single, paradoxically suggests

a bridal gown. That the two outfits are worn while Crawford performs the same actions and gestures further reinforces the links between them.

Anni wishes to wear the red dress for dinner but Maria says it is unsuitable for the society Anni is now in: 'You might as well wear a sign'. Instead she dons this pale, floaty number which fulfils expectations about what a demure young woman should wear. While descriptive notes and a sketch in a 1937 issue of *Stage* (55) confirm that the dress was actually of pale blue lace, the gown appears white in the film's black and white film stock, and this reinforces its bridal connotations. Filmy, with a long train and a lacy collar which frames the décolleté but also acts as both veil and hood, the gown connotes innocence and purity; in it Anni appears virginal, the large daisy in her hair another touch of the natural world which continues the floral motif established with the first dress. The daisy also has overtones of naivety, a lack of sophistication which another choice of bloom, such as the orchid or gardenia, would not have supplied. These hints of innate innocence are significant in suggesting that Anni remains spiritually untouched, even if her position as a showgirl has not allowed her to be literally or physically so. The daisy suggests that, despite her past, she is simple and unsullied.

Anni goes down to dinner in the hotel wearing this dress, and her descent of the hotel's main staircase provides a moment which anticipates her later descent in the infamous red beaded gown. Here Anni seems to float down the stairs, the camera tracking her movement; she pauses on the landing, which in another film might signify this was her catwalk moment. Here, however, that which confirms the transformation's success, the reverse shot of the appreciative views of others, is lacking. No one seems to see Anni descend: this potential instance of the catwalk moment is denied her. When Anni later repeats these movements and comes down the stairs an affianced woman, she wears the red dress and all eyes do watch her progress, but not as she would wish.

The next important costume moment comes when she tries on a dress to wear to the 'feste', the annual festival where the society folks at the hotel patronisingly dress in peasant garb for the evening, mingling with the low-born. How Anni attempts to adapt the peasant dress is significant here: she instructs the dress-maker to move the neckline down so that the bodice is not so modest and reveals more décolleté. While, then, Anni does appear

here in the peasant dress like the model on the music box in the credit sequence, she finds fault with the 'simple and modest' outfit. Anni's restless nature can be seen here resisting the impulses which would push her into a relationship with Giulio, holding out instead for marriage with Rudi Pal, for the greater financial security this would bring. Finding fault with the peasant gown as it is usually worn – with the filmy white blouse laced at the neck – Anni seeks to use it to showcase her sexualised body, insisting that the neckline be brought lower. She rejects the symbolism of the gown – its rendering her a mate befitting country boy Giulio – altering its traditional look to reveal more flesh.

When she eventually puts on the finished garment, Rudi is indeed captivated by her appearance and proclaims, unaware of the irony of the situation, 'No one but you, Anne, could be the most beautiful lady and the most beautiful peasant at the festival…' It seems noteworthy that the 'true lady', Maddelena, whom Rudi is happy to jilt for Anni, avows her discomfort at dressing in the peasant garb. The film seems to suggest she sees how patronising it is for 'the quality' to dress as their social inferiors for

The Bride Wore Red 3: The peasant dress

a day; when Anni therefore suits her peasant dress, it is because she actually, though covertly, belongs to this class.

Anni manages to secure a marriage proposal from Rudi while she is wearing the peasant dress, despite the fact that he, in his formal evening wear, has never looked less like a fitting partner for her. The costume narrative pairs Anni more neatly with Giulio, dressed in his finest outfit for the feste, so that the viewer does not despair of their relationship succeeding. With Anni now in the gown which the music box figure at the film's start forecast, what can the costume narrative produce to prolong the narrative and maintain suspense? This is where, finally, the red beaded dress comes into its own.

The scene after the tumultuous evening in which Anni receives two declarations of love is much quieter; she sits in her hotel suite feeling vaguely dispirited as Maria packs her trunks. For the first part of this scene Anni wears a long housecoat, which appears shining white and, again, ironically virginal, as Anni speaks calculatedly of the charms which have ensnared Rudi. As evening draws near, Anni seems no more cheerful, although certainly more energetic. As Maria packs up the last of the clothes, Anni paces, trying to exult in her triumph, trying to mark her last evening in the hotel before leaving to be married with some sign of her success. The dialogue Crawford delivers here indicates her rapid mood changes and sets the scene for the film's narrative and sartorial climax:

> Anni: Hey, Maria, look at Anni, I'm a bride. (Sings:) Here comes the bride, all dressed in … (snaps fingers) … red! The bride wore red! Ah, my wonderful red dress – you wouldn't let me wear it before, Maria, you were afraid, so was I, but now I'm not. (Taking dress over to mirror and looking at self:) But I still want to wear it 'cos I'm a bride, I'm a lady …

Anni stands before the mirror with the dress held up against her, and at this point a very slow and subtle dissolve takes her from outside the dress to inside it, so that she is wearing it and fully coiffed, made-up and ready for the evening. Adrian's major design achievement of this film is the red beaded dress Anni wears for this and the succeeding scene. Although the dress does not seem to have garnered the same attention that the famed *Letty Lynton* dress patently did (Gaines and Herzog, 1991), it has remained a celebrated garment outside the film because of its cost and lavish beading.

Howard Gutner, author of *Gowns by Adrian, the MGM Years* (2001), describes the dress's configuration:

> Cut on the bias, the dress is form-fitting, with a cape that is attached to the shoulders with a jewelled clasp. The gown, which weighed thirty pounds, was made with more than two million [glass] beads… Ten seamstresses worked for two weeks merely to bead the material, which was then hand crocheted on crepe romaine. (141)

Diana Vreeland has also noted (1976: 103) that the beads were shaded in different colours, those arranged over the hips being darker to give an impression of greater slimness. While the dazzling shininess of the dress is apparent even in the film stock's black and white, the outline of the dress itself is very reminiscent of the first evening gown Anni wears, back in the Trieste dive, and thus links her, at this moment, ineluctably back to it and the motif of prostitution. The red dress has the same low neckline which shows the bust-area flesh, and the same form-hugging cut which clings to Crawford's curves and accentuates them.

The Bride Wore Red 4: That red dress…

Maria instinctively felt that Anni's favourite dress would act as 'a sign' of her trade if worn in the hotel's exalted society, and here the bride is ironically seen donning it, rather than a more obviously suitable pale dress, like the one she had worn for her first dinner at the hotel. Although Howard Gutner (141) sees Anni's choice of dress here as a fashion faux pas, it seems more likely to me, reading Crawford's complex performance in this scene, that Anni selects the red dress because she is disgusted at her own mercenary behaviour, even while determined to continue with it to gain her goal of marriage to a rich man. Although she later condemns the gown as being 'too cheap', it symbolises the wealth to which Anni aspires, as well as confirming her, through its glittery beads and the use of diamond- and ruby-studded clasp on the cape, as an expensive item herself.

Gutner regards as the film's 'fatal flaw' the implausibility of Anni, who admits to having learnt her manners at the movies, not absorbing sartorial edicts there too, and realising that she cannot wear such a nouveau riche, vulgar outfit without giving herself away as low-born. To me, it is one of the factors which make the film itself so contradictory and thus so interesting. Not only does the audience have built-in sympathy for Anni's desire for the dress – we have heard several times of her long-standing wish for a red evening gown, to her the symbol of glamour and freedom – but by having Adrian's design for it make the red dress the show-stopping outfit of the film, the viewer is led to appreciate the very magnificence for which the film narrative, seemingly, would condemn it. Here the costume story finally clashes with the dominant narrative; it has worked alongside until now, carefully underlining character points through wardrobe items in the approved manner. With this dress, however, the costume idiolect makes a declaration of its own: the red dress is too fabulous and eye-catching to fit the easy condemnation which the narrative would foist on it.

The reactions of the other characters to the dress seem to speak the film's disapproval of the costume unequivocally. As Anni descends the hotel stairs this time, she finally receives the ocular attention denied her last descent. Now as she slinks down the stairs, followed by the camera, guests' heads turn and watch her, their conversation dying away. We can clearly see that the lobby area, dramatically lit for this significant moment, contains seven people and five shadows, all of which, save one, are turned towards Anni and seem to watch her. The lobby is crowded by these figures and

this crowd seems to censure her. Anni again halts for her catwalk moment and, in partly bitter, partly triumphant mood, receives the glances shot her way with her chin defiantly in the air. Rudi, coming across the dining room to meet her, seems to falter and look momentarily confused; he understands that Anni has committed a social indiscretion, but is himself much too gentlemanly to mention it. Anni seems equally to guess this and tries to force him to condemn her, asking him outright, 'How do I look?' Rudi's answer reveals his diplomacy but also his awareness of her gaffe: 'You look – you always look beautiful'. He avoids commenting on the specific dress, praising her personal beauty instead which remains unsullied by the red temptress gown.

After Count Armalia's telegram is delivered to the Countess, finally exposing Anni as a fraud, she retreats to her bedroom somewhat stunned by this reversal of fortune. Although she at first cries in Maria's arms, Anni soon recovers and begins to pace the room. The musical underscoring here picks up and builds, sounding both as if an imminent crisis is approaching and as if this will be a moment of triumph. Suddenly, musing, Anni notes that she feels happier than she has in ages; tellingly she describes a feeling of lightness – 'as if I'd been carrying a heavy load for miles and miles and suddenly I could put it down and walk on without it'. While it might be masquerading as a lady which has weighed Anni down, it seems equally likely her heavy burden has been having to deny her feelings for Giulio.

Having elided the first, sartorial, transformation, from plainly dressed off-duty showgirl to seemingly wealthy lady, the film now allows Crawford to enact her second transformation, from brittle and miserable to happy and carefree. She retains her hauteur, especially when dealing with the hotel manager, to whom she owes money for her extra weeks in her suite, but seems much more relaxed now that she no longer needs to pretend.

One final moment of the scene is included to conclude the story of the red dress; having longed for it, miraculously received it, hidden it and finally flaunted it, Anni needs to learn that she can do without it. Back at the mirror, wrapping her arms about herself, to embrace both her own body and the gown, she contemplates her reflection once more, addressing it in another telling piece of dialogue:

> Anni: Will you dance with me? You, in your lovely red dress? Oh, it's such a wonderful red dress, fit for a – Fit for me. It's not really beautiful at all,

you know, it's too red and too loud and too cheap. I don't like it anymore, I don't wanna wear it anymore, it's yours, Maria, I hate it!

Maria: I don't want it either, what would I do with it?

Anni: Hang it on the wall and tell people it's a picture of me.

Again, as in the scene before the mirror previously, Crawford's performance skilfully negotiates a path through rapidly changing and conflicting feelings, giving the viewer an insight into the character's self-reflection, conveyed by her modulating emotions towards the gown. The red dress is employed as a multi-useful symbol: it stands for her old way of life, and her unhappiness with it, her desires to be free of the need for selling herself; simultaneously, representing her former conception of ultimate glamour, it shows how the time at the hotel has changed her, how pretending to be a lady has actually altered her, toned down her formerly gaudy sense. Anni's desire for the red gown unconsciously gave away her meretricious persona; now that she has been able to leave that persona behind, she realises the gown's colour does not represent the quiet good taste a real lady would insist upon. Although it is not the dress that gives away Anni's true identity, the crowd's reception of her in the garment and the almost immediate exposure of her deceit seem to imply she has literally 'shown her true colours', given herself away as the 'tramp' she is by wearing it.

In the conversation quoted above, Crawford conveys Anni moving from an aesthetic appreciation of the gown to a moral awareness of its symbolic value. Her rising hysteria as she denounces it marks a rare moment where Anni loses control in the film; she soon recovers it, excusing Maria and dealing imperiously with the hotel manager.

Anni leaves the hotel, descending the stairs one last time, again finding all eyes upon her; for this final scene she wears a full-length black cloak, perhaps of velvet since it seems to have a deep pile and to absorb the light as velvet would do. In this rich but austere garment she leaves the hotel – illustrating how far she has fallen, only one of the hotel servants will open the door for her, the others disdaining her just as the 'quality' are doing – and energetically sets out walking. She is overtaken by Giulio and his donkey cart; his presence there after her exposure indicates Giulio's

willingness to forget her deceit and ambitions. Although, back in the hotel Anni had seemingly abandoned hope of regaining Giulio – 'he couldn't want me now' – her final outfit of the film, obviously chosen by her before leaving the hotel for ever, proves to be the peasant dress she had worn for the feste, still unpaid for, as she notes in her final lines of dialogue. Donning this dress indicates that she was hopeful of a reconciliation with Giulio after all, and seems to confirm that she is a fit match for him, a note strengthened when he tells her, in the film's last line, that the unpaid dress-maker is another one of his many cousins.

This concluding line of dialogue provides a neat conclusion to the drama – after it we see only the credits again, now projected over the music box and its figure of Anni in her peasant outfit. It provides the central couple with a mild laugh on which to go out of the film, since some of the humour of the previous scenes has accrued from the fact that everyone in the alpine town seems related to Giulio. But it also seems to connect the film back to the Cinderella story.

While, as noted, Count Armalia can be seen as the Fairy Godmother, although his initial benevolent actions within the story quickly end, it is also possible to see Giulio in the role of Anni's magical patron. Giulio attempts to look after Anni from the moment he meets her; when she is at the first dinner in the hotel and finds herself momentarily confused by the profusion of cutlery, it is a hotel waiter who discreetly instructs her – as requested by his cousin Giulio. The dress-maker who tries to stop Anni from revealing her cleavage is another relative. By finishing the film with the reminder that Anni owes money for the dress but, presumably as Giulio's wife will be excused payment of her debt, he can be seen again providing for her. Whereas Armalia's riches secured her the red dress of the title which proved to be unsuitable, Giulio provides the peasant dress which will appropriately garb her, the wife of the village postman, from now on.

Complicating this neatness somewhat is the fact that the film's plot trajectory does not return Anni to where she started; despite having deceived the people at the hotel, racking up debts to the unsympathetic hotelier but also kindly Maria, Anni finishes the movie much better off than she started. Although she seems to have been punished by public exposure for the masquerade, she actually has achieved a better life, escaping selling herself in the bar, leaving behind her bad reputation since

she will be respectably married. The film's costume narrative now seems to make more sense in starting with the image of the music box and its model of Anni in her peasant dress; by insisting on this as a sartorial starting point, then showing Anni wearing this costume in her final scene, the film elides the difference between the 'before' and the final 'after' versions of Anni, and the distance between her fate and what, perhaps, she deserves.

The film presents a fascinating character that it strives to condemn for selfish ambition but ends up rewarding. The 'fatal flaw' of the film seems not to be, as Gutner suggests, overlooking that Anni should have learnt how to dress like a lady as well as behave like one from the movies, but trying to use the red gown as a symbol when it must work in the film as well as an actual garment, and one designed to be superlatively eye-catching and glamorous. With Crawford's position as a supremely emulated star, this was bound to be problematic.

The issue of *Motion Picture* which had crowned Crawford 'The most copied girl in the world', imitated from 'Boston to Budapest to Bali', also insightfully noted the potential problem with this status. Fans copied Crawford, so when she adopted a fad, they followed it. But when a film employed costumes driven by character-oriented costuming, it became difficult for fans to discern what they should and should not copy. For example, Crawford was charged with initiating the fashion for over-use of lipstick;[6] she defends herself in the article by insisting this was part of her performance:

> 'That was character make-up for *Sadie Thompson* and *Letty Lynton* – both weak, wanton women… It should never have been put to use in private life'. But thousands of women, because they saw Joan's lush lips, thought it was a new beauty ruse and adopted it for their own. (69)

Another magazine article also shows awareness that audience members who copied Crawford made no distinction between her movie role style choices, such as the *Letty Lynton* puffed-sleeved dress, and her own personal ones, like going bare-legged, wearing sandals, and getting a tan (Spensely 1937: 30). If Crawford adopted them, on or off screen, they wanted to follow her and adopt them too. This is dangerous for a film if it relies on the costume as a means of condemning characters' moral behaviour. However, the nebulous and unresolved position of the red dress within the picture –

verbally condemned but visually ravishing – contributes to its fascinating ambiguity. Furthermore, while Crawford's nuanced performance brings out the conflict within the character, she is aided through enacting the complex emblematic relationship she has with the titular red dress.

The film costume's relationship with the narrative is generally a supportive one; following the line espoused by Edith Head and other costume designers, the film's wardrobe seeks to provide information on characters' identities. As noted, however, its own adherence to the dominant narrative is jeopardised by the red beaded gown. While the story seeks to use it as a symbol of all that is wrong in Anni's past and personality, the costume narrative showcases the dress as its ultimate achievement. Designer Adrian does not seem to toe the expected Hollywood line which, as Gaines suggests, made costumiers provide demure designs for big narrative moments: here, at the plot's climax, which takes Anni from triumphant and bitter bride-to-be to exposed adventuress, she wears the most conspicuous outfit of the entire film.

Gaines also asserted that costume could not anticipate narrative developments, but *The Bride Wore Red* ignores this too. From the opening shot of the music box and its model of Crawford in alpine maiden gear, we expect a return to this outfit and find it both at the moment Anni manages to secure the desired marriage proposal from Rudi, and at the end where her outfit choice signals to Giulio her acceptance, at last, of her love for him. The film's wardrobe choices thus do anticipate narrative and indeed anticipate Anni's several and sequential transformations. Juxtaposing the outfit at the film's opening with that in the following scene, the costume narrative suggests that cynical satin-clad Anni will come to wear the innocent peasant dirndl during the story and thus forecasts her moral as well as sartorial metamorphosis.

The film makes use of several of the key visual and thematic tropes found in these Hollywood transformations. Firstly, *The Bride Wore Red* employs two of the aesthetic motifs: the staircase and the accompanying catwalk moment. Anni's descent of the stairs in the hotel is shown at three separate points. Each of these descents is filmed from the same point of vantage for the camera, to reinforce the links between the scenes. On the first occasion Anni comes down the stairs, uncertain of herself and modestly garbed in seemingly bridal white. The next time she abandons this

pose of virginity and descends in her true scarlet-woman colours. Finally she comes down with both dignity and defiance, passing through the public spaces and the watching guests in sombre black, the funereal tone suiting the death of her ambitions. The repetition of the motif allows the different stages in Anni's trajectory to be compared and her progress charted.

Thematically, the film features first an invisible transformation, as we do not see the labour required to turn the wary showgirl into the poised lady: the simple change of costume, from plain day-dress to outlandish fur-trimmed coat, accomplishes this alteration itself. The motivation behind this is probably an urge to keep the film's pace up, in these opening minutes, not to halt the action for a thorough on-screen overhaul of Anni's appearance. Furthermore, very little about Anni actually changes; her hair is coiffed similarly, her makeup does not substantially vary. The costume alteration is the significant one and we see that in the editing together of scenes in the dress shop and then arriving at the resort.

The film also makes use, in a minor way, of the metaphor of shopping; the scene at Galli sets up the imminent alteration in Anni's appearance and also serves to introduce the motif of the red dress, as she calls out to order one. Crawford's enactment of Anni's reluctance to enter the shop, and her anticipation of rejection by the grand lady inside, anticipate by over fifty years the same elements in *Pretty Woman*, where Vivian's failure to be served in the Rodeo Drive shop by the snooty attendants fulfils the fears Anni evinces here.

Examining the usage of the motifs of the false transformation and the true self within the film helps to illuminate the text's unresolved ambivalence towards its central character. Anni is clearly set up by the narrative to be in disguise when she is masquerading as a lady at the hotel resort; as explored earlier, Hollywood cinema usually disapproves of false transformations, unless the film is a comedy and the effects of the transformation basically benign. Anni's imposture of a fine lady, however, serves no higher purpose than to capture a wealthy man. The film therefore should condemn her for her actions. But it cannot wholeheartedly do this. Anni seems so miserable in the bar, so superior to the people around her, so dignified in conversation with the patronising Armalia, that the first scene secures her our sympathies. Like Maria, preferring hard 'honest' work as a hotel maid to an easier but sleazier life in the bar, Anni seems right to

want more for herself, to attempt to break away from the degrading show she puts on nightly. This story set-up would be likely to attract sympathy for any actor; having Crawford in the part, with all her resonances of restless energy and drive to succeed, ensures it. In addition, the narrative allows flashes of a more tender personality to show through in Anni once she gets to the natural surroundings of the hotel; her love of nature softens her grasping covetous character. Further, her behaviour in chasing Rudi cannot be disliked by us any more strongly than it is by Anni herself; I think the ultimate recouping of her character is achieved by Crawford's subtle portrayal of a woman who is disgusted at her own mercenary conduct yet aware of the degradation to which she will return if she forsakes it.

Ultimately, the film is ambivalent about whether her impersonation of a lady has actually made Anni one. The 'true self' notion seems at first dismissed, as Anni tells Armalia she has learnt to behave as a society lady by watching them in films. This discounts the idea that Anni has an authentically noble core, which is surely Armalia's contention when he tries to proclaim Rudi and the casino waiter equals. But the film does dip towards suggesting that, rather than importing new character traits, her sartorial transformation brings out ones that have always been inherent. This begins with her love of the natural and is prepared for by the flowers pinned to her dress in the first scene. Anni experiences a freedom in the open air of the mountains different from the one she thought money would buy her, but of equal value and more accessible to a woman from her class. Although she initially resists the traditional peasant garb of the area and the man who would be her fitting mate while wearing it, the film ends with her triumphant display of a garment signifying she has realised her appropriate position, husband and garb.

Finally, the film makes use of the trope of dialling down the glamour which occurs quite regularly throughout Hollywood movies employing sartorial transformations as signifying internal alterations. Anni is not meant to carry on wearing the expensive couture clothes that she receives because of Armalia's ruse against Rudi; the story lets her (and the audience) enjoy them for a time but then confirms the more appropriate outfit is the peasant dirndl. Anni, like most of the heroines in such films, thus gains from her initial position, but her final outfit represents a climb down from the heights of glamour attained in the middle of the narrative. Movies

which employ this motif after the metamorphosis imply that the central female will have benefitted from her transformatory experience, she will have learnt how to make more of her appearance, but will afterwards maintain a level of attractiveness via costume and accessories which is both more appropriate for her everyday life and, significantly, more accessible and attainable for women in the audience. Interestingly, by setting the film in the exotic regions of Italy and the alps the film gains the possibility of excusing the slight risqué qualities of the plot through the protagonists being European, but it also loses the opportunity to ground Anni in a final costume which would be more like the daily wear of the audience members. While admittedly few women could probably hope to own and wear an outlandish fur coat such as the one which marks the initiation of Anni's masquerade, equally few would expect to wear a Heidi-dress in their normal lives. Again the film, hoping to use the red dress as a symbol of its heroine's wanton past and lower-class tastes miscalculates, as the beaded gown remains the most modern-looking as well as the most fabulous of the film's outfits, and thus the one most women in the audience would be likely to remember and covet.

CALAMITY JANE

Synopsis

'Calamity' Jane Canary (Doris Day) works on the Deadwood stagecoach, safeguarding the vehicle, its supplies and passengers. One of these is Francis Fryer (Dick Wesson), an actor who has been hired by the owner of Deadwood's Golden Garter theatre, Henry 'Milly' Miller (Paul Harvey). Miller mistakenly believed Franc*is* to be Franc*es*; fearing ruin if he disappoints his audience, Miller forces Fryer to go on, dressed as a woman. When this imposture is discovered, there is a near-riot. The audience members, all men, complain they need proper, female entertainment, like Adelaid Adams (Gale Robbins), a showgirl whose picture, taken wearing a basque, occasionally graces cigarette cards. Calam promises to go to Chicago and bring back Adams. Her best friend, Wild Bill Hickok (Howard Keel) doubts she can succeed, since he feels the grubby, trouser-wearing

Calam will be unable to persuade a lady to accompany her; he vows to come to the opening night dressed as an Indian squaw if Adelaid performs.

Arriving in Chicago, Calam finds where Adams is playing, sees her from a distance, and goes to her dressing room. Unbeknown to Calam, Adelaid is getting married and has given her last performance: she donates her entire wardrobe to her maid, Katie Brown (Allyn McLerie). Calam arrives to see Katie dressed in the basque Adams sports on the cigarette cards, and mistakes maid for mistress. Seeing her chance to get a start in show-business, Katie agrees to go to Deadwood. Bill does come to the first night of her show dressed as a squaw, but the audience again rebels when it realises Katie is only pretending to be Adelaid. Calam urges the men to give Katie a chance to perform as herself: the resultant number is a success and Katie becomes the darling of the townsmen. Chief amongst her suitors are Bill and Lieutenant Danny Gilmartin (Philip Carey), smitten by Katie even though Calam, who loves him, has previously saved his life.

Katie is grateful to Calam and agrees to live with her in a cabin outside town; they clean up the cabin and Katie attempts to do the same with her friend. Bill and Danny both ask Katie to a ball at the nearby fort. They draw straws for the privilege and Danny wins; Bill has to take Calam. He is astonished, however, when they arrive at the ball: underneath her rough army coat, Calam is wearing an evening gown and appears for once as the beautiful woman she is. Calam attracts the admiration of all the men at the ball except Danny, who asks Katie to marry him. Knowing Calam's feelings, she at first refuses, but eventually admits she loves him, and they kiss. Unfortunately, Calam sees them and takes her revenge by shooting a punch glass out of Katie's hand. Fuming about the betrayal, Calam purges her cabin of all Katie's belongings.

Calam goes to the Golden Garter and tells Katie to get out of town. Katie refuses and insists on the right to shoot a glass out of *her* hand, astonishing herself, Calam, and the whole assembly, when she seems to succeed. Actually, Bill shot the glass to teach Calam a lesson in humility. Bill and Calam eventually kiss, realising they have loved each other all along. Calam goes to tell Katie the good news, but finds her aggression the night before has driven her friend away: she has just left in the stagecoach. Jumping on her horse, Calam overtakes the stage, tells Katie her true feelings and they return to town for a double wedding.

Contexts

The Bride Wore Red was released while America was still working through the Depression, as attested by its wish-fulfilment scenario, presenting its protagonist and vicariously, its audience, with borrowed glamour. The social contexts in place by *Calamity Jane*'s release were very different, however. Not only past the Depression, but eight years into post-war prosperity and abundance, the national situation seemed radically transformed; similarly, at first glance there appear worlds of difference between the films' central female characters, brittle experienced Anni and gung-ho naïf Calam. On closer consideration, however, both women are encouraged to conform to societally approved norms of sexuality. Anni's voracious appetite for the comforts brought by wealth, achieved through men, is censured by her film, and her narrative attempts – however ambivalently – to manipulate her into moving beyond using her sexuality for gain, embracing instead safe containment in marriage for love. Calam's trajectory, from grubby tomboy to glowing bride, follows a similar path to normative containment since, after fighting, riding and governing her life like a man throughout the preceding 90-plus minutes of running time, the final few show her denuded of her gun, no longer clambering on to the stagecoach but, hampered by her bridal gown, having to be lifted on by her new husband.

The two women thus both have to subscribe to expectations about correct behaviour, demeanour and attire, or rather, behaviour and demeanour as *summed up* in attire. For, no less than *The Bride Wore Red*, *Calamity Jane* uses the costume transformations of its protagonist to signal assumptions about appropriate goals and desires for women. Just as Anni has her red dress to provide a problem to the narrative – being both 'too red, too loud, too cheap' and the most desirable gown to viewers' eyes – Calam has her buckskin trousers and shirt, which suit her life of activity so well. This, though, is just the problem: they do suit a life of activity, but this life is not supposed to suit a mid-century American maiden. For by 1953 very different ideas were in place about the suitability of female energy and drive; while both Joan Crawford and Doris Day have star personae that can be taken as signifying, to a high degree, this 'energy', Crawford's possession of this is indulged for most of the narrative running time of the 1930s films.

She is permitted to direct her energy in any way she likes: towards gaining a man, or a career, or a better life. Day, by contrast, is limited in her 1950s films in the way she can use her enthusiasm. Arriving in Hollywood an established singing star, Day was employed by Warner Brothers in film roles which sought to underline and cash in on her existing fame. For this reason her characters' energies are usually expended in singing, in the first half of her career (to 1959), but even while playing *professional* singers in these roles, song is more than a work tool, it is the medium through which the Day character impulsively releases her feelings.

From her first film appearance, in *Romance on the High Seas* (1948) onwards, Day is associated with emotion as expressed through spontaneous song. Here playing a singer, Georgia Garrett, Day performs onstage at the beginning and end of the film, but has more opportunities for pouring out her feelings musically – with five out of her seven numbers – than performing as a paid professional. Of the seven numbers, only the first is part of Garrett's regular employment, rehearsed and for money. The last, although onstage before a large audience, is narrativised as a gift to the performer – her big break – and simultaneously as an opportunity to express her true feelings through the felt words of the lyrics. Throughout these performances, although accompanied by paid musicians, the film seeks to underline through editing and camera work that Georgia is not merely singing the words as a job but is truly feeling the emotions of the lyrics. For the other numbers, the occasions are clearly shown to be irrepressible outpourings of the woman's emotions, as she sings privately to herself or her lover. Couching these moments as private underlines the authenticity of the emotions expressed in song by Garrett and thus indicates the relief music provides for her: singing is therefore not merely something by which to earn a living, but a way of coping with feelings and problems. This is shown most clearly on the occasion when Georgia, disappointed romantically while on a lavish cruise, wanders into the ship's empty nightclub, happens to find the club's trio practicing and *naturally* joins in. While her professionalism easily matches theirs, the song is presented as a simultaneous expression and alleviation of her feelings: singing about her disappointment lifts her bad mood. The by-chance occurrence of the song's staging underlines that song for Garrett is more than a job, it is her authentic, innate response to situations.

While Crawford, then, was permitted to direct her energies towards economic security, which might involve working hard at a job or at getting a rich man, Day's options are more limited: even when overtly acknowledged as a professional singer, her diegetic performances are narrativised as impulsive outpourings of emotion. Her professional showgirls and singers are thus de-professionalised, softened, in tune with the new post-war suspicion of successful career women.

The change in perceptions of acceptable female behaviour between the 1930s and 1950s has often been noted. Molly Haskell (1974) explored in depth what she saw as a decline in female roles from the start of sound cinema to her own time of writing in the early 70s. She saw the screwball heroines of the 30s, and the 40s' noir femmes fatales and melodrama heroines possessing far more vigour, even when contained by their narratives' endings, than the more placid characters of the 50s. Marjorie Rosen (1973) and Brandon French (1978) agreed. The anarchic drive and potential for mayhem permitted Joan Crawford's characters and the other women of 30s films, across many genres, had dissipated by the tamer 50s.

The difference between the Day and Crawford personae can be summed up by brief examination of one short scene from a film of 1949. Joan Crawford, as herself, beautifully dressed and smothered in mink, is sitting in a couturier's lounge area, when she overhears Dennis Morgan and Jack Carson arguing about a woman's outfit. Each man claims ownership of the woman on different days of the week; the scene enjoys its innuendo as each man promises to take off the woman's clothes – actually because they disapprove of each other's sartorial choices, but salaciously sounding as if they are going to be stripping her. The woman herself is nowhere to be seen, but Crawford jumps in:

> Joan Crawford: You two boys ought to be ashamed of yourselves! Just think of what you're doing to that poor little innocent girl!
>
> Jack Carson: Why, Joanie, y-y-y-you don't understand…

Although Doris Day – for she is the woman they have been squabbling over – enters the scene to concur that the men are not harming her, Crawford shushes her with an imperious wave. Day, as 'Judy Adams' in this 1949 film, *It's a Great Feeling*, can only stand and watch with Carson and Morgan as the juggernaut of Crawford's fury rolls on. During the scene Judy

wears the dress which has caused the commotion; it is a red and white gingham dress, styled with white cuffs and tie and with layers of gathering which give it the appearance of a bustle. While Crawford, wearing a black dress and dark, tasselled, fur wrap may seem at first glance more 'modern', her outfit actually links her to wartime fashions and the attractive but boxy suits she wore in *Mildred Pierce*. Adams, by contrast, shows in her silhouette the influence of Dior's 1947 New Look, and the dress represents what Turim called the 'sweetheart line', with its tightly gathered waist and full hips.

Just as Day's initially old-fashioned seeming appearance needs to be read in the context of 1949 as actually more modish than Crawford's, similarly her actions are also more in keeping with post-war assumptions about appropriate female behaviour. The brief scene thus serves as more than just a reminder of past Warner glories, or as an occasion to permit an old-school Warner star to hand over to the latest newcomer; it also serves as a showcase for the linked disciplines of costume and demeanour and the changed contemporary assumptions about appropriateness in both. Not only are their outfits different: Adams' demure, passive behaviour also highlights how outspoken and active Crawford is. After Crawford has departed, Judy is allowed to testify to the older actor's powers, as she sighs, 'Oh I just love Miss Crawford on the screen.' Since she has actually just encountered her in 'real life', this seems an ambivalent comment. Is Adams recognising that behaviour which seems compelling on screen, in melodramatic roles, seems annoying and out of place in actuality? This would enforce a message that women 'in real life' should not be so outlandish in their emotional outbursts, and this, in turn, would directly feed into a strand of contemporary popular media, conduct literature. This was the body of material offering advice and pronouncing on socially acceptable behaviour, which coterminously with this film of 1949 was busily mandating behavioural shifts for women.

Nancy A. Walker's collection of magazine articles from 1940–1960 charts changes across this period in societal assumptions concerning women and work, the war, marriage and motherhood (1998). These documents provide support for the often-advanced view that, after being recruited into employment during the war, women en masse were expected to return home, to their unpaid jobs as housewives, at the end of the conflict, and suggest that women were being cajoled or commanded by their monthly

reading material to give up their jobs. Both 'You Can't Have a Career and Be a Good Wife', from the run-up to the end of the war, and 'Why I Quit Working', produced six years into peacetime, detail the gains women will make in giving up their independent lifestyles – the latter article includes 'relaxation', 'improved appearance' and 'normalcy' (Walker: 84–85). Magazine articles such as these provided advice and 'real life' true stories about other women's choices alongside romantic fiction, recipes, fashion items – and advertising; as Walker notes, generally 50% of the content would be advertisements offering tempting photographs of the latest consumable (232).

The decade's increased affluence meant that behaviour held acceptable during times of national striving no longer seemed appropriate; being a member of good, 'polite' society matters less when one is concerned about finding one's next meal, as in the Depression, or when one is anxious about the outcome of war, but comes back into force during peacetime. While Crawford, then, might be allowed to expend her energies in any direction she wished, as a star from the 30s and 40s, Day, emerging into stardom in the 50s, was more constrained by renewed interest in 'polite' behaviour.

Calamity Jane takes its active female hero on a journey in which she is taught more passive conduct and more feminine appearance. The valorisation of these qualities does not arise out of the film's setting, the old 'wild' west, but its time of production: noisy, assertive and energetic Calam is perceived as transgressive by the standards of 1953. The film attempts her taming in order to reinforce ideas about appropriate gendered behaviour and goals; this transformation is achieved, like the others in this book, through a variety of well-established visual tropes and thematic elements, but ultimately is also aided by another aspect of the film's constituent parts: the persona of its star. For where both Crawford and Day 'meant' someone who would be taught a different, improved way of life during the narrative, the former would use this knowledge to forge a wealthier life, to raise her social standing and financial position; Day's goal is repeatedly stressed as wanting to achieve acceptance as singer, actor or dancer for her love of the art itself, not as a means to wealth or status.

This 'learning' trope can be found in other Day films around the cusp of the 50s, whether she is absorbing the deportment and vocabulary

befitting a rich man's wife in *Romance on the High Seas*, creating media interest in herself as a starlet in *It's a Great Feeling*, or training to be a professional singer, in a number of musicals including *My Dream is Yours* and *Tea for Two*. Similarly, *On Moonlight Bay* (1951) featured Day as a tomboy transitioning to a young lady, as did its sequel, *By the Light of the Silvery Moon* (1953), the star's vehicle directly before *Calamity Jane*. When Calam sings the film's opening number on top of 'The Deadwood Stage', she avers that she'll 'be home tonight By the Light of the Silvery Moon'; the film here includes an extra-diegetic reference to Day's previous picture, thus underlining the memory of her character there, Marjorie Winfield, in the minds of contemporary audiences. Reminding viewers of Marjorie, first seen in *On Moonlight Bay* a grubby androgynous tomboy, who transforms into a gracious attractive young lady, the film sets up expectations of a parallel transformation for grimy, boyish Calam. Above all, these metamorphoses are presented in Day's films as being natural, inevitable progressions: while Crawford sometimes unnaturally aggrandises knowledge unbefitting her social position in order to rise from it, Day naturally adopts different behaviours as she gets older – her transformations are *maturations* rather than revolutions.

Influences

While *The Bride Wore Red* contains resonances of both the Cinderella and Pygmalion stories, *Calamity Jane*, by contrast, presents the tale of its heroine's transformation without tapping into either. It has much more in common with the Méliès short film with which this book opened, in its presentation of the alteration from caterpillar to butterfly; where it diverges from all three Ur-stories, however, is in its avoidance of any specific agent of change. *Calamity Jane* has no character who can be identified as the Fairy Godmother or the Pygmalion artist-lover; it removes even the magician-conjurer who, in the Méliès film, inaugurates the change. Perhaps more in keeping with the star persona of its central actor, it presents an alternative version of linked sartorial and emotional developments, offered as part of an inevitable maturation process. Calam's ultimate translation from filthy deer-hides to spotless wedding dress is thus depicted as an unavoidable development, as authentic as it is innate. Thus while other transformation

stories examined in this book promote specific agents of change, no one other than Calam herself can really claim this position in the 1953 film.

All the men around her let Calam know she fails to meet their standards of womanhood, the townsfolk by unthinkingly accepting Calam as one of themselves, 'one of the boys' rather than a woman, and by tacitly criticising her appearance by comparison with that of Adelaid Adams. Wild Bill Hickok, however, does not leave his feelings unspoken, but constantly belittles her. Describing Adelaid he insists the showgirl 'is everything a woman ought to be', with a look of comparison at Calam which leaves no doubt about her inferiority. Although Bill criticises Calam's lack of womanly qualities, he is not himself the agent of her transformation. Bill can criticise Calam, and he can dress *himself* as a woman, but he cannot get her to dress as one.

Katie Brown is similarly unfitted for the role of Fairy Godmother; although she donates wardrobe items to our heroine, this is undercut immediately by the audience's knowledge that the finery she lends is not originally hers, as well as in the longer term because the transformation she endorses does not persist. While Calam properly realises her own shortcomings in femininity only when she meets Katie ('I never knew a woman could look like that'), she does not try to emulate her new friend; the impetus for this comes from Katie as she attempts to clean up both Calam's cabin and the woman who owns it. The musical number, 'A Woman's Touch', accomplishes the linked transformation of both, but the alterations do not equally abide: while the cabin is quickly rendered clean and feminine through the magic of montage and music, Calam is less easily made over: Katie can teach her the – 1950s approved – value of housework, but internalising the lesson of feminine dressing is not so easy.

With each of Calam's transformations into feminine garb we are presented with a fait accompli: Katie is not seen dressing her, fixing her hair, or advising on makeup. This again undercuts Katie's potential for Fairy Godmother status: her agency is limited to supplying the clothes, and in offering a model of approved femininity in her own person for copying, but even this is only effective for a time: Calam reverts to her buckskins after repudiating Katie and her clothing. It is very noticeable that at the centre of the narrative in *Calamity Jane*, as with *The Bride Wore Red*, is a

heroine who is more active in her own story than the women in the traditional Cinderella and Pygmalion stories. While Calam's journey from buckskins to bridal gown is portrayed as largely a matter of maturation, the significant way-stations on this journey are elected by her and coalesce around her selection of white garments. Calam's ultimate outfit is not, in the end, the wedding dress in which she finishes the picture, but the spotlessly clean riding ensemble which she wears to celebrate her 'Secret Love'.

Although the film is interested in directing its heroine into a more feminine appearance and demeanour, it does not present her with an expert to teach her. This teacher-figure features in other filmic transformations, from Amanda in *The Assassin*, to Cher in *Clueless*, to Nigel in the final film we will explore in detail, *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006). Such an expert figure would not be out of place in the 50s, since, as noted, contemporary conduct literature encouraged American consumers to seek advice on deportment, dress and etiquette from professional authorities such as Emily Post (1922). Although the wealth of consumer goods available for purchase at the time might suggest a skilled guide would be needed to take Calam through the lush abundance of available outfits and accessories, the film's insistence on the inevitability of her transformation explains why no expert is necessary. Calam naturally grows to realise how she should dress and behave, just as she naturally realises, at the appropriate time, that it is Bill and not Danny whom she loves. Calam's journey from besmirched tomboy to glowing bride is thus presented as a natural one, despite her actual behaviour having to change so radically.

Costume reading

While it shares with them the metamorphosis theme and the visual and thematic tropes so often used by Hollywood cinema, *Calamity Jane* differs from the other two films discussed as case studies in the very low number of outfits worn by its chief character. Across the 101 minutes' running time and 20-plus scenes of the film, she wears just seven different outfits. This is primarily because, for so much of the action, she is dressed in an ensemble which both suits and symbolises her active and masculinised lifestyle and employment: her buckskin trouser suit, generally accessorised with cavalry cap and fringed suede boots.

Calam's outfit is a practical choice, given that her job is to ride shotgun on the Deadwood Stage: she needs leather gloves to wield the coach's whip without hurting her hands, she needs her hair tied back and kept out of her eyes to keep her vision clear, a hat to protect her from the elements, and trousers for the horse riding which is a necessary part of her job also. Most significant about this outfit are the factors of utility, androgyny and dirtiness: the buckskin suit looks like she has worn it every day for years.

While Calam wears this key outfit for many scenes, there are subtle differences of detail which hint at changes in her emotional state before the bigger transformations that follow. During 'The Deadwood Stage' number, on the instance of her first introduction to the audience, Calam wears the buckskins with the jerkin tightly done up over a blue, purple and green checked or striped shirt: its collar is observable at her throat, under the red bandana tied round her neck which forms part of her regular outfit. Significantly, however, the shirt she wears underneath the jerkin changes with her progress through the narrative; she wears the checked shirt from the start of the movie up to the song-argument with Bill, 'I Can Do Without You'. After this, as Calam is about to leave on the stagecoach bound for Chicago and Adelaid, under her jerkin a different shirt is clearly visible: one of pure white. This may be an appropriate garment for Calam to have chosen – it may be her best shirt, fitting wear for carrying out an important town commission, although the practicality of travelling in pure white linen is doubtful. Symbolically, however, it seems to have another resonance. It is the first time Calam has worn white and the shirt appears especially noticeable as she grumpily listens to Bill again criticising her femininity:

> Bill: Say, Calam, do me a favour.
>
> Calam: What?
>
> Bill: When you get to Chigagy, notice the women, how they act and what they wear. Get yourself some female clothes and fixins, you know, clothes, ribbons, perfume, things like that.
>
> Calam: Look, if you don't like the way I smell…

Calamity Jane 1: Calam's customary buckskins

> Bill: Oh, it aint nothing personal. Only if you ever crawled out of that deer-hide and dolled up a bit, I've got a hunch you'd be a passable pretty gal.

This exchange raises an interesting point: why would it be 'doing [Bill] a favour' if Calam began to dress in a more orthodox feminine fashion? Perhaps, like his other criticisms of her lack of femininity, this comment betrays the fact that Bill is already attracted to his sidekick, but needs to legitimate this attraction by diffusing the homosexual charge it has while she is in male attire. Calam's white shirt here acts as a tiny guarantee that all will be well between the protagonists by the film's end. Just as the casting of Day herself as *Calamity Jane* assures the audience she will 'crawl out of that deer-hide' and reveal herself as the beautiful star we are used to seeing, the white shirt forecasts the tomboy will eschew her male attire for a similarly white bridal dress by the final scene.

I think it is significant that Calam sports this white shirt before she is taken sartorially in hand by Katie; it reinforces the film's impetus towards deskilling Katie as the agent of Calam's change and underlines the fact that the evolution in the heroine's wardrobe is part of a *natural* transition which occurs once she realises her proper place and proper mate.

The white shirt's next appearance in the film comes after Calam has repudiated Katie and her 'female clothes and fixins', after seeing her kiss Lieutenant Gilmartin. Visiting the Golden Garter to threaten Katie, Calam has reverted to her filthy buckskins, but the white shirt is very visible, especially as it is worn with the collar out over the top of the jerkin. Despite casting off Katie and her lessons, Calam has unusually taken time to arrange her shirt collar. This can be taken as evidence of Calam's own advancement a little further towards a mature feminine dress- and lifestyle. The white shirt attains the status of a miniature discourse of its own within the narrative; its presence signals Calam's nascent femininity struggling to emerge and to direct her towards proper coupling with Bill, who seems to be the occasion for her displaying the item. The presence of the colour white in Calam's outfits hints at a more vulnerable femininity than she usually parades, and culminates in the white bridal gown at the end of the film. Thus the white shirt, its colour carrying the usual symbolism of purity and virginity, sets up a subtle forecast of that dress and its neat closure for the film's romantic narrative.

Calam spends most of her time during the film in these various permutations of her deerskin trouser suit, shirt, bandana and boots, and it is only after she and Katie attempt to settle down together in Calam's cabin, that major changes are observed. These wardrobe changes occur during the song which accompanies Katie and Calam's cleaning up of the cabin, 'A Woman's Touch'; the song is introduced as Calam, finally realising how dilapidated her cabin is, 'not fit for a dog, let alone a lady', prepares to take Katie back to the Deadwood hotel. Katie, however, is more sanguine about the place: 'All it needs is a Woman's Touch' she declares, as the musical introduction begins to vamp in the background.

As Katie encourages Calam with a gesture to employ a broom to sweep up, and clouds of dust assail the camera, a fade takes the viewer to a duster being repeatedly flicked, and a costume change: Katie's. At the beginning of the scene, Katie had worn the electric blue velvet dress in which she came to Deadwood, an outfit speaking of luxury and indolence, totally unfitted for the task of cabin-cleaning. After the fade we find her back in the neat maid's outfit she wore when first seen, tending the real Adelaid in her dressing room: a plain dark grey-brown gown with no frills, worn here with a neat white mob cap to cover her hair.

Using fades to introduce costume change and cover time necessary for its accomplishment is continued throughout the number: at one point, Calam enters the cabin with a watering can and tends to a withered rose bush in a window box. Her actions are accompanied on the soundtrack first by a shimmering noise which imitates the sprinkling of water and then a swelling of strings which cues the viewer to the magic of blooming roses as well as a sartorial alteration for Calam herself: as the roses appear in full bloom, the camera pulls back to show Calam admiring them, now for the first time without her deer-hide jerkin. Before, the white shirt had replaced the checked one underneath the top, but here the jerkin has been entirely discarded, replaced by a clean, short-sleeved red, white and blue checked shirt. Though Calam seems still to sport her usual dusty buckskin trews and boots, the alteration in her upper body clothing seems enough to transform the whole of her outfit.

Katie now decides to glamorise her friend. The musical number begins to go into an orchestral section, since the business to follow is too important to dilute by having the pair sing; this would split the audience's attention,

and it needs to be fixed on the pantomime to come. While Katie begins to sort through her clothes for something suitable, Calam espies an intriguing garment and begins to slip it on like a jacket. Since Calam has held this up first at its full extent to the camera, the audience realises, even as she does not, that this is a pair of lacy bloomers. When Katie sees her friend struggling to get her arms in the legs of the garment, she grasps Calam's shoulder to catch her attention, then shakes her head. Calam repeats this negative headshake with an interrogative look at her friend, and Katie again signals 'no'. As Calam is helped out of the garment by Katie, an evident furrow of confusion – what is the dang thing for, then? – is observable between her eyebrows. Katie's facial expressions are important too: she first looks at Calam, permits herself a slight eye roll of amazement at her friend not knowing what bloomers are, then drops her gaze to the garment as she folds it tidily. Her next look is back at Calam's face; then her eyes drop to where the bloomers should be on Calam. This plainly says to me that Katie is wondering what Calamity *does* wear under her trousers if she does not know what bloomers are, and this seems confirmed by the slight eyebrow raise Katie gives as she places the bloomers back on the bed.

The section fades out with the two women thus: Calam looking bemused about the garment's utility and Katie seeking an outfit for Calam. As the next part of the scene fades in, we learn that she has found one: Calam now sports a long black skirt, red cummerbund and long-sleeved frilled blouse in her key feminine colour, white. Probably the first thing we can recognise in the shot is Calam in this new outfit, but a DVD player's slow forward button allows further probing: what the scene fades in on is actually those same bloomers again, now in their correct place on Calam's lower half. The camera fades in on these, then Calam pulls the edge of the black skirt down over it. At this point the orchestral section comes to an end too, and the singing recommences; eliciting the audience's attention with another factor, song, further distracts attention from the risqué glimpse of underwear the camera momentarily afforded.

The 'Woman's Touch' number thus accomplishes several transformations in its approximately four-minute duration. It has shown Katie sensibly change her clothes in order to perform housework; placed Calam first in a short-sleeved shirt and trousers, then in a long skirt, with her hair seeming washed and styled and, for the first time in the film,

Calamity Jane 2: Calam, Katie and the bloomers…

noticeable red lipstick on her mouth. Katie seems subtly to have persuaded her friend not only to embrace housework but also to feminise her appearance. Fittingly, Katie introduces the skirt and blouse ensemble when the cabin cleaning has been accomplished: for mopping and sweeping, the trousers and checked shirt are appropriate. Thus the feminised costume comes to seem like a reward for all the labour now completed: with the fire heating the kettle for tea and baking a cake, the pair can both, in their prettiest at-home outfits, relax and celebrate the pay-off of their hard work, and each other.

While this musical number transforms Calam somewhat, the apotheosis of her feminisation comes in the ball scene. Here, underneath Custer's old coat, is a dream ballgown: pink satin, trimmed with roses and swags of tulle, it is the most Cinderella-like garment of the entire film. For all the film's dresses, the costumiers have attempted to abide by a vague periodicity, with the result that some form of bustle is incorporated into each, even if this tends to take the form of a giant bow rather than a

'bumroll'. The dresses Calam wears each feature a tightly boned bodice, full skirts and a kind of gathered apron pulled tightly across the stomach at the front, which becomes the bustle behind. Although all the fashionable female characters in the film sport some kind of bustle with accompanying front detail, it is noticeable that only in Calamity's case is there an insistence on keeping the front material relatively tight. Other women's outfits feature much more material, bows, frills, swags. Only Calamity's silhouette is maintained as lean. This has the effect of underlining the woman's active fitness even as the film attempts at times to suggest this is a problem.

The pink dress permits for the only time in the film the sight of Day's décolleté: the dress is low-cut at the front and back, although gatherings of filmy tulle, secured at the left shoulder with a rosebud, cover the back and neck areas. With her hair styled up and decorated with more roses, Calamity has never looked more in line with orthodox femininity. Having shed her heavy masculine coat, Calam primps her hair until Bill returns to escort her into the ballroom. Now she gets her 'big reveal' and the reactions of the assembly fully justify the wait. Although the sight of Calam thus beautified astonishes all around her, it does not have the same impact for two parties: Katie, and the audience. As Danny stares in wonderment, Katie smiles, proud of her handiwork. For the film's audience too this moment does not act to revolutionise our appreciation of Calam's looks as, like Katie, we have seen her incremental changes. The fact that we have been privy to private moments where she experiments with different outfits assures the audience that we have seen the 'real' Calamity Jane developing. To the folk at Fort Scully she may be the grimy scout who has finally 'dolled up', but we have seen the path that has taken her to this point and importantly, as the white shirt discourse has hinted, beyond it. That significant changes have been taking place in private moments – with us and Katie as the only witnesses – points the way forward to the film's emotional climax, where Calam finally figures out who she is and reveals herself – solely to us – in her new outfit for the 'Secret Love' number.

The white theme continues in the following scene, when, as noted above, Calam re-dons her filthy buckskins but wears underneath them her white linen shirt, when she goes to threaten Katie. At the start of the film Calam's deer-hide jerkin had been tightly tied up cross-wise with a thong

Calamity Jane 3: The pink ballgown

through holes pierced in the material; later, when first sporting the white shirt, the laces of the jerkin were looser, showing more of the shirt below; now they seem even more relaxed, and her shirt collar is out and tucked over the jerkin's. Calam's outfit is more loosely constructed even though she is wound tight with disappointment. It seems significant that she should be maximising the impact of the white shirt in this scene, as this is the occasion for Bill and Calam finally to realise that they love each other; significant also – and ameliorating the film's drive to normalise and tame Calam – is the fact that Bill kisses her while she is wearing the buckskin ensemble. This also provides a rare nod to the Cinderella story in the film: the prince recognises Cinderella's worth while she is still in her kitchen state.

Having realised her love for Bill, Calam is set for her biggest, and most important, sartorial transformation. Unlike the pink ballgown which she borrowed from Katie, Calam appears for the 'Secret Love' number in an outfit which must be her own; as usual, she wears male attire, but the crucial difference now is its spotless cleanliness, as well as the full emphasis given in the first part of the song to the snowy white shirt she wears with no other covering.

Calam's trouser suit is now of soft, caramel suede; her soft suede cowboy hat, new suede fringed boots and jacket all match. Interestingly too, the jacket, when she puts it on, has buttons instead of the thong arrangement to fasten it. This and her new cleanliness – her hair also gleams, and there is again the presence of a bright red lipstick further attesting she has taken pains with her appearance – indicate her transformation has been a matter of *civilisation*. Instead of flinging the same dirty clothes on every day, Calam now seems to take the time to bathe and select clean clothing, and has the patience for buttons.

Just as it is important to the softening of Calam's taming that Bill kisses her while she is still clad in male attire, it is also significant that her own choice of outfit, once happy and at peace with the world, is not a dress or skirt, but another trouser suit. This, worn with gun belt, full holster, and shirt and tie, is a halfway-house garment, being still a trouser ensemble, but now a dazzlingly clean one. As I have noted previously (Jeffers McDonald, 2007), Martin Pumphrey found the cleanliness of the traditional male hero to be a well-established trope of the Western; thus Calam's new cleanliness

does not remove her heroic stature, since the femininising, civilising aspects of cleanliness which effect the hero are seen as necessary within the genre as signs of the taming of the West. Calam's commitment to cleanliness is her real capitulation to femininity; since the white linen both predates and outlasts her submission to the femininity endorsed by Katie, it seems more a natural maturation than an imposed alteration.

The film's final outfit for its heroine is her wedding dress. While this may seem the sartorial highlight of the film, and the logical endpoint of its heroine's journey towards heteronormativity, it is noticeably featured in a short scene, and outweighed in terms of emotional importance by the preceding 'Secret Love' number. Calam's wedding dress is as modest as the other more masculine clothing she has worn throughout the film: though this is her big dress moment, she has not gone for a white version of the princess gown she wore to the Fort Scully ball. There is no display of décolleté: the dress instead has a high stiff collar that stands up around Calam's throat. While there is no flesh on display, the tightness of the

Calamity Jane 4: The Secret Love trousers

corseted dress top does show off the shape of Calam's breasts; the very tight long sleeves and slender silhouette, even with the usual apron-swag cum bustle, all go to produce a very tight columnar figure, its boyish slimness partly offset by the bust emphasis.

By contrast, Katie appears in a very flirty wedding dress. Throughout the film she has been used to provide a visual alternative to Calam; polarities established around clean/dirty, passive/active, demure/noisy have clearly placed Katie in the first, societally endorsed category. Now, however, the weighting of the binary seems reversed: the pair look coquettish/modest, with Calam holding the approved position. Katie's dress features noticeable cleavage and her dress, while still white, does not have the simple *broderie anglaise* look to it of her friend's, but is trimmed with silver ribbon and lace, an ample silver satin swag at front and bow behind, with a yellowy-white flowery lace bodice and sleeves of at least two types of transparent lace. In this abundance of trimmings it seems *sur raffiné*, less Western and more artfully 'city', and works against Katie to suggest there is something more artificial, less natural about her than Calam. Katie also seems less demure in this scene than before, especially by contrast with her friend; while Calam sings a reprise of her tender love song, Katie is given a chorus of 'Windy City', with lyrics which make her journey to Deadwood and marriage to the Lieutenant seem more like the work of a gold-digger than a woman in love, especially when she shows off her 'golden nugget' wedding ring.

It seems that the film wants to reverse its usual endorsement of the type of femininity presented by Katie here, and praise Calam's modesty instead. Having the other woman in an over-frilled wedding gown puts even more emphasis on the quiet good taste of Calamity's, and indicates that she has at last learnt the appropriate dress and demeanour of a bride. The film's ending can be seen closing down Calam's options and homogenising her personality, making her just another pioneer woman in town rather than the brave and energetic hero she has been throughout the movie. This would seem to be borne out by the fact that Bill removes her gun, which Calam has tucked into a convenient swag in her bustle, just before they climb aboard the stagecoach to go on their honeymoon. Calam's explanation for needing the gun is also disappointing: whereas before it was an essential piece of her working gear, used to scare off or kill 'injuns'

and quieten rowdy mobs, now she wants it to safeguard her new property against other women:

> Bill: Hey! What's this fer?
>
> Calam: Well, that's just in case any more actresses roll in from Chicagey…

The concealing folds in the gathered material of Calam's wedding dress can also be read in line with Sue Harper's (1987 and 1994) ideas about costume discourse carrying female genital symbolism. Just as Margaret Lockwood's loops and whorls in her gowns and haircuts can seem to represent the vulval, so it could be argued that the swags and furls of fabric bedecking Calam and the other fashionable ladies of Deadwood signify, on their outer clothing, parts of their inner bodies. This reading enhances Calam's difference from the other women, even when she is wearing feminine attire: all the other women have bigger, flouncier bustles than the lean Calamity, continuing her androgyny even when she is in a dress. The emphasis is always on the slender, columnar line of her figure: each of her dresses is built around a long, hard bust piece, kept tight and erect by a structure of boning under the shiny satin: it is not difficult to see Calam's body as phallic, since her dresses, even the pink ballgown, are noticeably less fulsome and puffy than those of the other women.

If we can read the swags and whorls of fabric that adhere to Calam's columnar figure as signifying the inner-parts of her body, what can we then make of the moment where Bill removes the gun she has tucked in one handy furl? We could perhaps posit this as either the triumph of phallic power over the feminine, as a castration of her appropriated masculine symbol, or as a more blatantly sexual image: now they are married, Bill is allowed to delve into her folds. Whether or not we find this line of thought convincing, it remains true that the other fashionable ladies of Deadwood all feature gathered bustle-like features on their dresses, and that none of them has the gathered apron at the front of her gown pulled as tightly as Calam's.

It is interesting that though the film-makers have obviously taken some pains to historicise the costume, the dresses remain, as Jane Gaines (1993) notes feminine outfitting in the genre frequently does, 'tied to trends' in fashion contemporary with the film's making, not its setting. In this way the fashionable ladies of Deadwood can be seen wearing versions

of the contemporaneous 'sweetheart' line, as designated by Turim and discussed above, only slightly exaggerated for 'historical' effect. Far from being the 'improbable period hybrid[s]' that Gaines notes (in Buscombe, 1997: 100) prevailing in women's costume in the Western film, however, the bouffant gathered gowns of Katie, Calam and the other Deadwood ladies manage to hint both at history and fit with contemporary ideas about the proper wear for weddings or formals, as can be seen in glamorous couture outfits showcased in fashion magazines – and epitomised by the wedding dress worn by Jacqueline Bouvier when she married John F. Kennedy, in the year of *Calamity Jane*'s release – as well as in outfits offered for sale in the more widely affordable mail order catalogue Sears.[7]

The level of 'fit' between women's costumes on screen and off at this time helps the film tacitly make points about contemporary ideals of feminine behaviour and appearance even while overtly dealing with a nineteenth-century frontierswoman. It is mid-twentieth-century gender norms regarding behaviour and dress speaking to her, and to women in the audience, rather than those pertaining to pioneer women of a rough prospecting town sometime after 1876.[8]

Viewed in this way, Katie's job is not just to make her friend dress in a feminine fashion, and behave in a more appropriately passive way, but also to get her to pay attention to the housework. Calam's resolution, as revealed in the outfit she chooses for her big 'Secret Love' number, may be to keep the active life she has habitually led, but she moderates this now by her new commitment to cleanliness of person.

Calamity Jane makes use of many of the thematic transformation tropes so frequently recurring in Hollywood cinema, and when it eschews one of these, the avoidance clearly fits with the film's goals. For example, it does not feature a scene of visible transformation; while the rarity of this feature was noted previously, *Calamity Jane* chooses not to dramatise the alteration scene in order to reinforce its central messages. Using the invisible transformation device instead makes sense firstly since the film has decided not to use the Cinderella or Pygmalion myths as its main inspiration: not showing Katie or Bill working to change Calam, either by fixing her hair, painting her face, or changing her clothes, de-skills them and renders them both equally unfit to be claimed as the agent of change, the Fairy Godmother or artist-lover. As noted, the invisible transformation

can also seem paradoxically both magical *and* natural. Calam's metamorphosis in the musical number is radical enough to cause gasps, yet without anyone visibly labouring to change her, the alteration can seem to be a predictable one, an evolution rather than a revolution, like a caterpillar sloughing off its dull chrysalis to reveal bright wings.

With this metaphor in mind it also makes sense that the film should not elect to use the shopping trope. Calam's alteration would seem less instinctive, less part of an inevitable maturation process if she were seen selecting garments. Instead, she seems to inherit the feminine clothes at the right time, as many contemporary audience members must have themselves inherited hand-me-down items from older siblings. This reinforces the maturation theme with an *everything-in-good-time* feel to the donation of the feminine garments.

Calam's most radical transformation, when she emerges from her cabin radiant with happiness and cleanliness in her spotless new trouser suit, again necessitates for its success as a metaphor of altered sensibilities, as well as clothing, that no visible shopping or labour be involved. The film wants to show that Calam's transmutation here is *easy*, and so no element in the changeover that hints at hard work can be permitted. Calam's revision, becoming a happy glowing girl, in love with the proper person and now desirous of proper, mature female goals – 'buildin' a cabin … raisin' young 'uns' – seems to have been accomplished easily and solely through her embrace of clean clothing.

With regard to the other regularly used transformation tropes, the film makes very evident use of the misrecognition moment, and it is significant in terms of forecasting the narrative resolution that it should be Bill who experiences this in such dramatic terms. Arriving at the ball, Bill helps Calam with her coat, a clear look of resignation at being lumbered with Calam on his face. When he returns, he glances towards the woman he sees standing where Calam was; now he can see the back of a woman wearing a delicious confection in pink. He gives her a tiny up-and-down look, then turns his back on her as he looks around for Calamity. At this point he freezes: his brain has caught up with his eyes. His mouth open, he slowly turns around and stares at his now-transformed friend. As if sensing his disbelieving face behind her, Calam turns and walks past him – affording him another up-and-down look at her new exterior – then

smiles, sticks out her arm for him to take, and bears him off into the ball.

Bill's initial inability to appreciate that the woman in the pink ballgown is Calamity, and then his inability to believe it, testify to the enormity of her transformation at this point. The fact that the scene is also enacted without dialogue, with only the orchestra playing in the background, underlines the gravity of the moment as well as meaning that Bill's astonishment is enacted solely through pantomime. If his reaction is silent, that of the other men at the ball is not, as some of the officers and Francis comment on her changed appearance. Danny's reaction is to stare in silent amazement too, but the proper double take of misrecognition is reserved for Bill, and thus forecasts again that it is he and Calam who will form a couple.

Again, as with *The Bride Wore Red*, exploring the ways in which the false transformation and the true self are employed within the film emphasises the ambivalence *Calamity Jane* evinces towards its heroine, and which its ending does nothing to close down. The film first uses several, incremental transformations, across successive scenes, and this progression acts to heighten Calam's glamour. But it also suggests that the sartorial alterations are being spaced out, paced, so that Calam will learn to accept them, and the narrative has no room for a Fairy Godmother or any other agent of change other than Calam herself. This is why the first set of transformations are signified as false: because they are so easily rejected, when Calam believes Katie has betrayed her and renounces the woman and her outfits together. Alongside this strand of transformation, the costume narrative has also been quietly building its alternative skein of real changes: this is where the white shirt becomes important, as it is here the substantial and lasting changes are made visible.

That Calam's 'true self' is revealed through her costume alterations the film never doubts, but it takes pains to stress that the true Calam is the active, physical one who, reviled by the townsmen and Danny for driving Katie away, does not hang her head and weep but gallops off to bring her back. This is significant because the rest of the dominant narrative seems to be trying to exhort Calam – and other independent-minded women in the audience – that proper feminine behaviour, the type that gets you a husband, involves being more passive, demure, quiet – and quietly

manipulative. Against Calam's free-spoken, plain-dealing behaviour, the film sets Katie's more subtle manoeuvres; wanting to talk to Danny alone in the cabin, she hides the full log-basket under a shawl, sending Bill out to cut more wood. Calam would have just asked Bill to go away. While the film thus wants at times to suggest that Katie's is the approved version of femininity, the passivity enjoined on women by contemporary society meant that they had to resort to subterfuge to achieve their desires, and this was equally viewed as undesirable. Although the film does not develop this theme, it can be seen pushing Katie into the mould of manipulative minx, the type of young woman who, in contemporaneous films such as *The Moon Is Blue* (1953) and *The Tender Trap* (1955) were viewed as dishonestly stage-managing their own vulnerability, baiting the trap of marriage with much-advertised virginity. This disapproval of Katie seems to come in right at the end of *Calamity Jane* when the film very slightly seems to position her as manipulative rather than marrying for love.

Calam's discovery of her true self is established in contrast to Katie's happy adoption of the costumes and accessories discarded by Adelaid Adams. While Katie gleefully embraces hand-me-down glamour, Calam rejects it, revealing her heart and true self at once in the film's most tender musical number. Her wedding dress, although feminine, exhibits a personal modesty, with its very high neckline and long tight buttoned-up sleeves. The final thematic trope of the metamorphosis film, the amelioration of glamour, then fits exactly into the movie's portrayal of its heroine: at home for most of the film in male attire which clashes with the bouffant shapes of the other women, Calam rejects the feminine clothing Katie lends her, electing the clean honey-coloured buckskin outfit for her big romantic number. As with the other central women in the case studies, Calam has to reach her own place of femininity, and she finds it in clean trousers.

While *Calamity Jane* then does make use of several of the thematic elements which so often are employed by Hollywood film to illustrate the transformation, it uses fewer of the habitual visual effects achieved by camera and editing. Perhaps because of the irrepressible, fizzing energy of its central character, it does not feature the moment of still display, so often framed at the top of a staircase. Instead, rarely, the catwalk moment is staged as a walk: in the moment when Calam turns and sees the dumbstruck

Bill staring at her, she moves gracefully but purposefully past him, then stops and holds out her arm for him to take.

The 'pan up the body' shot which seems to signify camera approval of the transformation occurs in the 'Woman's Touch' number, incorporating two alterations of Calam's wardrobe. The approbatory pan comes with the second of these and is worked into the sly shot confirming Katie has now initiated Calam into the mystery of bloomers: beginning with a close up on one of the garment's red ribbon bows shining amongst the white lace, the camera begins slowly panning upwards, moving from the bow to Calam's hands bringing the edge of the dark skirt down over the intimate garment, rising to take in her trim waist, bust and then face as she primps her collar. It seems significant that the film stages the pantomime business with the bloomers right before using the approbatory pan: this works to confirm that, if the garment is now in its rightful place, Calam herself is also in her rightful, feminised, state. The fact too that this is shot so as not to reproduce any character's point of view (it is not Katie's, as she is at the back of the cabin), authenticates the moment as a private one of personal development. Although the 'Woman's Touch' number thus seems to endorse Calam in this feminised outfit, having just learnt the important lesson of housework, the film does not maintain this unambiguous sanction of the passive woman directing her energies to keeping her domestic space, and herself as its correlative, clean and neat, but allows Calam back into her trousers and onto horseback.

Contemporary reviewers were quick to pick up on the fact that the heroine's trajectory to romantic closure was one of improved outfitting – 'Hickok discovers there's a heap of that woman that had been concealed under her backwoodsman clothing' (Luban, 1953: 3) – but they also seemed to miss the fact that Bill and Calam get together when she has reverted to masculine attire: 'Calamity finally gets a hold of herself, puts on some frills and finery and at the fadeout wins Wild Bill, whom she has loved all along.' (Canby, 1953: 2045).

Perhaps these *male* reviewers were not as adept as Harper (1987) asserts female viewers were at reading costume narrative rather than the dominant storyline. Even so, it seems evident that while the film's intention is to follow the usual Hollywood transformation trajectory, its methods are not so usual: it sidesteps promoting either Bill or Katie as the

chief agent of change. Instead it stresses its time-based, natural and inevitable maturation theme; this is not Cinderella but, as Vincent Canby further notes in the *Motion Picture Herald* review, 'a variation on the ugly-duckling-into-beautiful-swan theme' (2045).

The film further reinforces the ease by which Calam transitions from a tomboy to a woman by allowing her to remain in masculine (albeit immaculate) attire. But this decision also leaves open the loophole of androgyny that the narrative's drive towards appropriate female behaviour and goals might have hoped to secure.

Here we can again see in action Jane Gaines' argument from *Fabrications*, that the dominant and costume narratives in films can be in conflict. The dominant narrative trajectory takes the grubby female yahoo and attempts to tame her, educating her to approved 1950s standards of female conduct, which necessitates her leaving behind the unfitting masculine occupation and the clothes that go with it. The costume narrative, by contrast, and however ambivalently, permits her to maintain a level of androgyny that seems out of step with contemporaneous assumptions about polite female manners and looks. By situating the emotional climax of the film, not in the hastily mounted wedding scene (occupying just two minutes of the film's duration), but in the 'Secret Love' number, both longer and more emotionally rich than the wedding, the costume narrative showcases Calam's apogee while she is still in trousers.

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA

Synopsis

Andrea 'Andy' Sachs (Anne Hathaway), a recent college graduate hoping to become a journalist, is interviewed for a job on *Runway* magazine, even though she knows and cares nothing about fashion. The Editor In Chief, Miranda Priestly (Meryl Streep), of whom everyone in the office is terrified, ignores the reservations her First Assistant Emily (Emily Blunt) has about Andy and hires her as Second Assistant. Although she is scornful of the whole concept of fashion, when Andy is told by Emily that just one

year working for Miranda guarantees any job in journalism, she determines to hold out.

Despite Miranda's impossible personality, Andy commits herself to the job, but does not seem to gain any ground. Her boyfriend, friends and family all tell her to quit since she is so unhappy, but she refuses. Nigel (Stanley Tucci), *Runway*'s art director tells her that although she works hard, her superior attitude to fashion and those who love it holds her back. Andy realises this is true and begs Nigel to help her show she is committed by making her look like a *Runway* girl. Newly groomed, fashionably outfitted and accessorised, Andy begins to make a success of the job, but her relationship with her boyfriend suffers, and they split up.

The highlight of the First Assistant's year is to be taken to Paris for Fashion Week. Emily gets terrible flu but insists on going, until Andy is offered the trip by Miranda – if *she* tells Emily the bad news. Andy complies when, running errands for Miranda, Emily is hit by a car and hospitalised. Emily, on crutches, is left behind as Miranda, Andy and Nigel fly off to France.

Returning to her suite one evening Andy finds Miranda tearful, and the woman reveals a rare vulnerability as she admits her husband is divorcing her. Andy offers her sympathy but Miranda's *froideur* takes over again. Still feeling bad for her boss, Andy is getting ready for a date with Christian Thompson (Simon Baker), a young writer, when Nigel comes to tell her *his* big news: he will soon be leaving, becoming President of a new company for a global brand, with Miranda's blessing.

After dinner, Andy and Christian end up in bed together. The next morning Andy discovers a mocked-up *Runway* cover – the woman for whom Christian is working, Jacqueline Follet, is planning to oust Miranda and take over the magazine. Andy rushes to warn her but Miranda has already dealt with the plot – by giving Jacqueline Nigel's new job. Andy expresses her surprise at Miranda's ruthlessness, sacrificing Nigel's dreams, but her boss calmly says Andy is capable of equally selfish behaviour: didn't she replace Emily on the Paris trip? Andy is horrified and realises how far she has come from her original goals and standards. She leaves Miranda and returns home to America.

Andy attends another job interview, this time for a writing job on a New York paper. The Editor asks why she was at *Runway*, and Andy

truthfully replies the experience taught her a lot. In any case, the Editor says, she must have impressed Miranda, who has provided a glowing reference. Happily hired, Andy is walking back through Manhattan when she sees Miranda getting into her limousine. Though she offers a hesitant wave, Miranda seems to ignore her; alone inside the car, however, the demon boss reveals a small smile.

Contexts

If *The Bride Wore Red* and *Calamity Jane* were easy to see as products, of and tapping into, their specific contemporary contexts, it is more difficult to place *The Devil Wears Prada* in a similar historical and societal milieu, since the film is only four years old at the time of writing. What we lose by not having the detachment of distance, however, we gain in being able to pinpoint specific influences which might, with time, otherwise become lost. In other words, *The Devil Wears Prada* can still be advanced as a piece of mid-noughties zeitgeist before the passage of time reveals the particular socio-cultural resonances this specific time has.

Examination of the film's references leads in several different directions: while the Crawford vehicle clearly spoke to and of her persona and the Depression, and Day's film can be read in terms of her star image and specific 1950s notions of appropriate female behaviour and appearance, it is not so easy to isolate the most dominant influence on *The Devil Wears Prada*. As with the two earlier texts, a large amount of the context for the film centres around the actor playing the central character, but the collaboration of the film's stylist and director on a previous celebrated project, the film's status as adaptation of a best-seller and the contemporaneous glut of television makeover shows also fed into the film and its reception. These various facets of pressure on the text will be considered in turn.

Casting Anne Hathaway as Andy Sachs sent a very clear message to potential audience members: the film would contain a major sartorial metamorphosis. Given the book's focus on fashion and the reversal of fortunes enjoyed by the heroine once she has succumbed to the high-glamour world of *Runway*, this casting can be seen as an example of what Richard Dyer (1979) calls 'perfect fit': the actor fits the role so closely that

there is no tension between her star persona and the character she is playing (145). Putting Hathaway, already associated with costume-based transformations, into a 'makeover movie' reinforced the film's narrative trajectory even before filming started. Hathaway's association with transformation began with her first film role, *The Princess Diaries* (2001) – Mia Thermopolis, finding herself the heir to a European crown, metamorphoses to befit this status. Hathaway has built on this so that her star persona now reflects the concept of 'the makeover', with this term relating not only to what will happen *in* her films, but *across* her films too. While undergoing makeovers in her roles has become a dominant part of her star persona, her presence in a film can also be seen as itself initiating change, as with the biopic of Jane Austen ('Plain Jane's life gets a sexy makeover for the screen' – Stone, 2007: C8). Lately also, negotiating the transition from teen to adult star, she can be seen making over her career from one type of role to another.

Another of the main factors feeding into contemporary reception of *The Devil Wears Prada* was the combination of the film's director, David Frankel, and costume designer Patricia Field. Both had worked together previously on *Sex And The City*, and viewers aware of this could hope to find similar elements in the film: an accent on eye-catching, designer-brand fashions, a concern to follow the female characters' stories in a similarly luxe version of Manhattan, and an irreverent approach to sex. While *The Devil Wears Prada* may at first seem to disappoint over these particulars, the film actually does deliver them, albeit in a scaled-down version. Within its tighter time-span, *The Devil Wears Prada* weaves together the stories of Andy, Miranda and Emily, with ensemble scenes driving much of the film. Although the accent on sex is much reduced in the film, Andy's devotion to her job does not deprive her of a sex life, as she gets to sleep with Christian.

Above all, however, what Field's name especially connotes is *fashion*: she acts as a guarantee that the film will feature lots of outré outfits. Interestingly, in noting Field's involvement in the film, some reviewers felt that she had 'got it wrong' when it came to portraying what fashion journalists actually wore; the reviewer of the *Los Angeles Times*, observing Andy wearing a toe ring, protested: 'no fashion magazine assistant or editor would don a toe ring. Ever' (Moore, 2006: E1). To some, these costume

decisions seemed intended rather than misguided, with the film actually satirising the world of fashion (Freeman, 61; *Premiere*[9]). Field herself in the DVD commentary does not allude to any such parodic intention, however; similarly, newspaper interviews detail her wardrobe decisions without any suggestion of intent to undermine. As the caption beneath one photograph of the stylist confirms, Field's line seems to be: 'I love fashion, and I would never do something bad to the industry' (Avins, 2006: ix). While Booth Moore, who despaired of Field putting Andy in a toe ring, concluded that *The Devil Wears Prada* 'is a film about insiders that has been costumed for outsiders' (E1), perhaps, as we will see in the detailed costume analysis, the film sets up a complex costume narrative which not all viewers, fashion insiders or otherwise, may have understood.

A further influence on the film was its status as an adaptation of the 2003 Lauren Weisberger *roman à clef*. An insightful article in *The Hollywood Reporter* indicates the book's part in the film's potential success:

> 'Prada' offers all sorts of riches for a movie: an established, catchy chick-lit title with a huge female following; a coming-of-age tale about a smart Cinderella named Andy who undergoes a total makeover; a glamorous Manhattan fashion magazine setting; and, last but not least, a magnificent Faustian villain… (Thompson, 2006)

Thompson perceptively points to the fairy-tale aspect ('Cinderella') of the plot as an element of its popularity, as well as understanding that the movie can be 'pre-sold' to the audience who enjoyed the book. Most of the contemporaneous reviews of the film mentioned the source novel (Didcock; Portman; Ringel Gillespie; Groen, all 2006), although, again, as with the costumes by Field, there was debate over whether the film had honoured or betrayed its source. Rick Groen felt the former: 'The source is Lauren Weisberger's *roman à clef* about her stint at Vogue magazine, a rather yappy novel whose shrill tone has been somewhat muted in Aline Brosh McKenna's adaptation' (Groen, 2006: 7).

By contrast, *The Hollywood Reporter*'s view was that the film remained ambivalent about the high-fashion world it depicted, eventually failing to condemn it as the book did (Honeycutt, 2006). It seems to me that the film employs its costume transformation as a way of metamorphosing the source text. In this way the sartorial transformation becomes a way of adapting the book and indeed of transforming its message, subverting it

from an all-out attack on high-fashion consumerism and becoming, as Honeycutt notes, something much more ambivalent about the potential of clothing to alter one's personality and fortune.

The final cultural influence on the film version of *The Devil Wears Prada* is the makeover show. Such shows, where 'ordinary' members of the public are aided in their transformations by professionals, attaining by the end of the episode, a new sense of self-worth, as well as a new face, haircut or wardrobe, became popular programming from 2002, with the launch of ABC's *Extreme Makeover*. With everything – one's self, home, car, job, diet, partner – seemingly appropriate for transformation, the tropes which have sustained Hollywood metamorphoses for decades might seem to be given a new currency. It is interesting, then, that some cinematic tropes carried into the television programmes are given a new twist, and several of the most definitive are ignored.

The television makeover show plays up what the filmic transformation often ignores: the work necessary to achieve the transformation itself. By contrast, the show suppresses what the film often highlights instead: the shopping and invisible transformations achieved during pans and fades and covered by music. While so many of the films looked at in this volume choose to attest the supreme success of the female transformation by a moment of misrecognition by the important man in the transformee's life, this is watered down in the television versions to the 'No!' uttered in disbelief and joy at the heroine's 'big reveal'. The most significant omissions from the television shows are the false transformations and the idea of ameliorating the glamour. While the films frequently work to show the specific wardrobe transformation foisted on the central female is not entirely right for her, and she must find her own comfortable level of attractiveness, the investment of shows such as *Extreme Makeover* in high-level glamour and expensive, painful and long-term physical changes renders impossible the ideas of opting out, changing one's mind, or modulating alterations to suit personal circumstances; and there must be no hint that these new selves are actually disguises. While the visual tropes of the film-based transformation – the use of the staircase as a place to stage the reveal, the 'catwalk' moment as the newly made woman pauses and poses for attention, the pan up her body and the occasional use of slow-motion – may be incorporated into the television series' menu of

devices, there are then notable differences in the themes used by films and television, even though metamorphosis seems to be at the heart of both of them.

An article by Brenda Weber (2005) subjects *Extreme Makeover* to the same unsympathetic scrutiny it imposes on participants.[10] Weber examines the show's ideological foundations, and traces its language and imagery to their roots. Significantly, what she attests as the fundamental principles of the show are often different from those of film transformations; these differences point to very different engagements with the concepts of identity, desire and agency at play within television and cinema. Three points she raises are particularly interesting to our study.

Weber's first point is that *Extreme Makeover* also raises the idea of a 'true self'. However, she sees this concept problematised by the show, unlike the films which I suggest use it as a type of rescue. Weber quotes one made-over participant's assertion – 'I'm me now!' (1) – commenting that the woman's self-perceived external unattractiveness had caused a split between her outer and inner selves, her exterior form and interior identity. Surgery is seen as having healed this split, bringing about unity. Weber concludes however that because this 'coherent subjectivity' (1) is perceived in terms of 'outside/in changes' rather than the reverse, unity is based only on the surfaces with which the show is obsessed (8), and is therefore illusory. As I have suggested, the notion that a change of haircut, makeup or wardrobe could fundamentally change one's personality causes the films which portray and valorise such changes considerable anxiety, an anxiety assuaged, partially, by the idea of the 'true self'. In this way, a film transformation is not a making over but a bringing out of what was always there: not a change so much as a revelation. *Extreme Makeover* does not try to work this rhetoric into its shows, Weber suggests, because its concern with surfaces prohibits the type of interiority the films rely on evoking.

The two other ideas that Weber raises are that there are national, and topical, aspects to *Extreme Makeover*. Since I am specifically studying Hollywood films, it is interesting that Weber claims there are inherently American resonances to the show. Weber reads the commitment to self-change embodied in the willingness to participate in the show as signalling a determination to strive at attractiveness; this involves not

only the celebrated American value of hard work, but also a surrender to capitalist consumerism:

> …personal transformation is the first and most necessary step in self-improvement and, thus, to a sort of sublime American entitlement… The commitment to continual makeovers propels a necessary consumerism. (4)

Reflecting on the use of the Cinderella story in the iconography of the show, Weber calls the makeover 'one-part fairy tale and one-part American dream' (15). She adds that through the power of the metamorphosis, 'ostracized ugliness [is] brought into meritocracy through glamour' (15). It is interesting that Weber sees the obligation to self-transform as the duty of a loyal American citizen; the 'sublime American entitlement' is perhaps similar to the idea that anyone can grow up to be President of the United States; equally, anyone can grow up to be beautiful. Lowly birth, religion, poverty, unattractiveness: none of these need stand in the way of either ambition, as long as one is prepared to work hard to achieve one's goals. While Weber speaks about the 'democratisation' of glamour in this way, it should be noted that this democracy is only open to those who can afford expensive plastic surgery or are prepared to live with the debts.

If the reward of democratic beauty is that anyone can have it, reversing the valence of the connection implies that *everyone should*. Weber offers the idea of 'the makeover ultimatum': 'if you can change, you should; if you don't, accept the consequences' (5). This can clearly be seen as a message which carries over to the film world of *The Devil Wears Prada*, where it is perceived as part of Andy's duty to *Runway* to take fashion seriously enough to align her image with the corporate one.

This is where the film seems to me to ask a question which Weber does not touch on, however: if it is an American's duty to buy into consumerism, is it equally one's duty to purchase expensive goods? *The Devil Wears Prada* might initially be seen suggesting that designer items are the desirable ones and it is thus Andy's responsibility to gain and wear these. Is this message meant to carry across the cinema screen and be addressed to audiences also? Perhaps not: as the examination of the costume narrative will indicate, there are hints that buying haute couture is not necessarily the patriotic obligation that making the most of oneself is. It should also be noted that Patricia Field is well known not only for her

styling of Carrie Bradshaw et al in *Sex And The City* but also for designing ranges for budget-price outlets like Payless Shoes.[11] Her work with Marks and Spencer, for a Winter 2008 collection, was dubbed by Field a further step in 'my philosophy of "the democratisation of luxury"' (Barnett, 2008).

The other aspect of *Extreme Makeover* I think pertinent to *The Devil Wears Prada* is Weber's claim that the show (2002–2008) is particularly 'now'. She starts by vaguely gesturing to the circumstances of the programme, what she calls 'the zeitgeist of anxieties about the body out of control' (15); then hones in on a specific event she first indicates, and then rejects, as the genesis of the show:

> Cultural anthropologists have argued that anxieties about policing bodily excesses are most prevalent in cultures where external boundaries are under attack… We can see this, quite specifically, in recent US anxieties over terrorism, punctuated by the attacks on September 11, 2001. *Extreme Makeover* debuted in December 2002, and in many ways our collective emotional investment in the show could be read as a larger hope of enforcing boundaries… Ultimately however I would argue that the contentious state of the world is less at issue for *Extreme Makeover* than is a deeper investment in our collective desire and anxiety. In many ways, this form of boundary policing is not about a culture under siege but about a culture believing itself under siege. (16)

Weber posits that the terrorist attacks on America in September 2001 had a particular impact on the country's psyche, directly linking the establishment of the makeover show to the anxieties felt after the country's body politic had been damaged. Attempts to control individual bodies on the show can be read as attempts to exercise power over individuals, making them whole and united, in order to atone for lacking the power to heal the country as a whole.

Although Weber steps away from directly attributing the founding of *Extreme Makeover* to the events of September 11, I have two thoughts about this. Firstly, we have seen in this book that metamorphosis through costume and cosmetic change has been a current theme throughout Hollywood cinema; there is thus perhaps more permanence to the anxieties in the American psyche than Weber appreciates.

Secondly, it seems to me that the programme's insistence on the importance of consumerism could be read in patriotic terms in the light

of the events Weber references. It might then be significant that *The Devil Wears Prada* spends the majority of its running time in Manhattan, not only because this is where Andy-original Lauren Weisberger spent her year indentured to *Vogue*, but also because New York City needed healing as the city principally attacked in 2001. Showing a variety of montages, then, where city street and Central Park become the locale for both official fashion shoots and Andy's own impromptu fashion shows, the film demonstrates patriotic citizens doing their duty by continuing their commitment to consumerism. That this is an American duty at a time not only of potential terrorist threat but also economic downturn (Harris, 2009) does not counteract Weber's suggestion, but ties it more closely to quotidian worries than extreme threats.

Influences

The Devil Wears Prada fits easily into the ranks of film transformations which largely follow the Cinderella story. Clueless Andy labours hard at her job but cannot be successful – or go to the ball – until Fairy Godfather Nigel magically transforms her into a chic fashionista. While the film enjoys its little joke about gay-coded Nigel being a *Fairy* Godfather, it also contains other fairy-tale elements, including the heroine forced to toil (Andy), the haughty evil queen (Miranda) and cruel stepsister (Emily). Interestingly, however, the film abandons the handsome prince/loyal commoner conflict (Christian/Nate), leaving the princess to get the right job rather than the right man at the film's end.

The film's employment of fairy-tale elements was not overlooked by reviewers, with many recognising the Cinderella elements,[12] while Barry Didcock of *The Sunday Herald* noted also the maturation-element built into the story which fits also with Hans Christian Andersen's tale of inevitable and natural improvement: 'Anne Hathaway plays "ugly" duckling to Meryl Streep's boss from hell' (2006: 19).

There are divergences, however, from the standard Cinderella tale in the film, and it is interesting that in this the movie also diverts from the book. More attention will be paid later to the specific changes the film wrought on its source material; here it is enough to note that Andy's fashion hopelessness in the book is not so simply cured by the access to

Nigel's magic Closet and its transformatory clothes. The book also has no equivalent of the Nigel character, and the film can thus be seen inventing and shaping his story to create the person of the Fairy Godfather. Further, Book Andy does not receive one swift lesson in style which she internalises, as her film equivalent does. In the section of the novel where Miranda and her entourage go to Paris for the fashion shows, Andy is so convinced that she will commit endless fashion crimes that her wardrobe, hair and beauty colleagues put together a bible for her, detailing what to wear for different occasions during her fortnight away, advice offered even at the micro-level of eye shadow (Weisberger 2003:317). Film Andy, by great contrast, undergoes her initiation into the fashion world and thence experiences no backsliding. The film's decision to grant Andy agency and expertise in choosing outfits and applying makeup has two effects: it makes her transformation the more total and thus the more magical, as befits the Cinderella story, and it also underlines the ease with which any woman could take hold of her life and present herself more fashionably – a significant part of its intentions.

It seems to me important that the film, while it is happy to recast and re-inflect various plot points and events from the book, does not see fit to add a Pygmalion figure to its mix. Nigel inaugurates Andy's self-renovation, guiding her through the wondrous Closet, picking garments and accessories for her, then handing her over to makeup and coiffure professionals, but he does not do so from a personal or romantic interest, as the Pygmalion lover-artist does. Nor for that matter can he really be seen, like Cinderella's Fairy Godmother, elevating a wrongly cast-down heroine to her rightful place. Andy is not a fashionable or wealthy young woman forced into a more lowly (costume) position, as Cinderella is; instead, she has shown herself unwilling to accept the supremacy of surfaces which *Runway* insists upon and is thus more lucky than worthy that Nigel takes pity on her.

The two young men who compete for Andy's affections in the film's (rather superficial) romantic sub-plot have no effect on her wardrobe at all: neither is qualified for the role of Pygmalion. What is also missing from this film's costume narrative, especially in comparison to those of Anni and Calam, is Andy's input to her transformation. While Anni dresses like a lady to secure a better future, and Calam chooses her own version of a

modulated androgyny once she realises her 'secret love', Andy does little to embrace the transformation beyond asking Nigel to help her fit in, and then wearing all the fabulous outfits the Closet provides. Her passivity in this is perhaps an important part of the narrative and is used at the end of the film when Andy seems, like Calam, to have found a level of glamour she is comfortable to make her own.

Costume reading

What happens when the costume narrative is employed on a text which not only openly highlights the importance of the right clothes for a woman, but is specifically about the importance of *fashion*? Both *The Bride Wore Red* and *Calamity Jane* include the idea of fashion, in that Anni obviously buys clothes she believes will make her look like a fashionable lady, and similarly, the gowns Katie inherits from Adelaid and passes on to Calam are designed to signal they are fashionable to the audience. But *The Devil Wears Prada* is *specifically* about an institutionalised obsession with not only the latest clothes, but the priciest, most exclusive, couture clothes, packaged and sold as images to the readers of *Runway*. Whether these readers – and the women in the film's audience – are being exhorted to go out and buy these garments, or high-street copycat versions, however, remains to be seen.

I hinted above that I believe the film uses the costume narrative to remake the book: the wardrobe story is the method of adaptation. But when the source novel is both so well known and so replete with names of labels and designers, does this cause a problem for the film-makers? Anne Thompson for *The Hollywood Reporter* (2006) indicated that many different screenwriters tried to shape an arc for the story that would take it from a series of rather whiny anecdotes to a fully formed narrative, but the shape of the plot was not the only problem facing the film-makers. As items to be paraded, bought, sold, borrowed, coveted and endlessly discussed, clothes themselves were fore-grounded in the book; could Patricia Field then hope to use costume to underline the characters envisaged by director Frankel, and herself, when the book had already provided so many sartorial fiats? Could the schematisation of character-delineating costume work amidst the noise produced by so many other clothes, especially those produced by big-name couturiers?

The creative team behind the film found a solution to combat Weisberger's label-mania. In the book, clothes, bags, shoes, jewellery, hats, belts and other accessories are incessantly mentioned.[13] The film however, not only refuses to use items of clothing mentioned at specific moments in the novel, but reworks the book's narrative to place an entirely different emphasis on Andy's journey through the film. Looking at the costume narrative of the film, I want to explore not only the usual aspects of the wardrobe choices, but also consider how the costume decisions alter both its heroine's trajectory and character.

On the DVD commentary for the film Field notes that there were 'upwards of 60 changes' for Hathaway's character in the film: this profusion of outfits prevents attention being paid to each individual ensemble. I will thus dwell on pre-transformation outfits, the metamorphosis scene itself, and key ensembles after it. Overall the trajectory of Andy's costumes is from chaos to coherence, from multicolour to monochrome, and, reversing these less-is-more lessons, from tiny accessories to statement pieces.

The film starts with a montage cross-cutting the morning rituals of various women against Andy's dressing for her interview at *Runway*. The reverential donning of their clothes and makeup by these model-like females is contrasted with Andy's uncaring attitude to clothes: where they choose with deliberation, she grabs with haste. Her nonchalant adoption of a dingy pair of panties contrasts with their assiduous selection of petal-like, leopard print or frothy lingerie, their measured breakfasts (exactly eight almonds placed in a bowl) cut against her carefree purchase of an onion bagel, munched absentmindedly as she walks to the subway. The thrust of the sequence is to establish the different places that clothes and personal appearance have in the lives of these different women; Andy, about to be interviewed at a publishers, is concerned with her written output, whereas the others, whose job is to appear glamorous, are *themselves* their own output.

Going for her interview at *Runway*, Andy wears an outfit which might have passed muster at college but is heavily overwritten as unsuitable for an interview anywhere, let alone a fashion magazine. Patricia Field, the film's costume designer, calls Andy's pre-transformation look 'American Simple' and Hathaway suggests the character is an Everygirl: 'kind of the girl next door: … She looks like a girl you know … that you saw on the subway

… like your babysitter'.[14] In contrast to the chic women of the introduction, Andy is coded as sartorially incoherent, in black trousers, white shirt under lilac jumper, brown-beige jacket, big brown belted coat, knitted wool scarf and gloves. The total effect makes Andy out of place in the sleek world of publishing she is entering.

The following day Andy's work begins in earnest and she learns her job is to rush around town collecting hot coffee and anything else for which Miranda feels a vague need ('I want 10 or 15 skirts from Calvin Klein'). It is interesting that although Andy is still in her 'before' incarnation here, Patricia Field dresses her in a designer coat: the wintry Manhattan weather demands she wears an overcoat, and Andy varies her wardrobe by wearing a white one. Underneath, her outfit is again uniformly incoherent and this is commented on overtly by Nigel and, with a glance of distaste, by Miranda, but the use of the coat is puzzling unless seen as a fashion forecast of Andy's future. A bone white coat by Calvin Klein, it is worn by Andy with a brown and white spotted woolly scarf and, again, woolly gloves; bundled up into it, with her hair cascading down and around her coat collar and scarf, Andy still looks a mess. But significantly, she looks like she has the potential for glamour, and this is possibly why the Calvin Klein coat is used here. The film's project throughout is to indicate that Andy can, with very little commitment and assistance, become inordinately glamorous. That she has a Calvin Klein coat in her wardrobe is not enough to confer this glamour on her *alone*, yet, it indicates the path she will follow to find what Miranda instantly notices she lacks: 'You have no style…'

The clothes under the coat also attain significance: they form the basis for a stern lecture Miranda gives Andy – and the audience – lest anyone doubt either the seriousness of what Miranda does for a living or the impact of her decisions on the rest of the dressed world. Andy wears a thick blue jumper, a blue plaid skirt, thick black tights and black clumpy slip-ons. Nigel attempts to help her with this particular faux pas, bringing her a pair of high-heeled sling-backs, but Andy rejects them, assuming Miranda realises her worth goes beyond the superficial. Miranda instantly disabuses her of this illusion, however, by casting her gaze at the offending footwear with a moue of disgust. Interestingly, the camera, in reproducing Miranda's dissatisfied look down the length of Andy's body to her shoes, inverts the usual *upward* glance of approval noted as a transformation

trope. The DVD commentary reveals that this is a signature look of the cameraman, Florian Balhaus, common enough within his oeuvre to be dubbed by colleagues 'a Florian tilt'. This tilt was devised when Balhaus was working, with Field and Frankel, on *Sex and The City*, and was purposefully meant to showcase the programme's footwear. Having used this shoe moment to underline Andy's fashion ignorance, the scene moves on to crystallise this even further, as Miranda takes Andy to task for her sneering attitude to fashion.

The speech, not present in the novel, bolsters Miranda's character, showing her power is not illusory and thus not totally dictatorial. Miranda examines two blue belts to use on an outfit she is attempting to construct. An assistant notes that choosing between them is 'a tough call … they're both so different', at which Andy sniggers: to her they seem almost identical. Miranda challenges her, and Andy, trying to get out of the difficult situation, attempts an escape which summons Miranda's measured but devastating tirade:

> Andy: … I'm still learning about this stuff …
>
> Miranda: This *stuff*? Oh, okay, I see … you think this has nothing to do with you. *You* go to *your* closet and you select, I don't know, that lumpy blue sweater, frinstance, because you're trying to tell the world that you take yourself too seriously to care about what you put on your back. But what you don't know is that that sweater is not just blue … it's not turquoise, it's

The Devil Wears Prada 1: Andy at her interview

> not lapis, it's *cerulean*, and you're also blithely unaware of the fact that in 2002 Oscar de la Renta did a collection of cerulean gowns and then I think it was Yves Saint Laurent wasn't it, who showed cerulean military jackets – I think we need a jacket here – and then cerulean showed up in the collections of eight different designers. And then it filtered down through the department stores and then trickled down into some tragic casual corner where you no doubt fished it out of some clearance bin. However, that 'blue' represents millions of dollars and countless jobs and it's sort of comical how you think you've made a choice that exempts you from the fashion industry when in fact you're wearing a sweater that was selected for you by the people in this room – from a pile of *stuff*.

In the next scene, in Andy's apartment, she complains about Miranda's rant while her boyfriend fries her a cheese sandwich. The business both characters carry out is significant; he is cooking a highly calorific dinner, and she, bemoaning the dressing down Miranda gave her, is putting on a casual outfit for home wear. That this consists of two vests, with sweatpants, a Northwestern University sweatshirt and a couple of hair-bands proves that Andy has not got Miranda's message. She still believes herself impervious to the dictates of fashion, yet the chaotic outfit reveals her character, exposing her inability to make the right kind of fashion choices (this top or this) while also suggesting that she is happy dressing in the type of messy casuals students wear for comfort. However, there is a sign at the scene's end that Andy is starting to pay attention: she won't eat the sandwich. While she says she's not hungry, her follow-up remark shows the *Runway* ethos is beginning to permeate: 'that is why those girls are so skinny…'

The next significant costume Andy wears is the 'before' outfit on the day of her transformation. In *The Devil Wears Prada* the failure of an outfit is usually associated with some other failure by Andy at one of her office tasks, illustrating she has not yet grasped that dressing to fit in is one of her principal duties and that everything will improve with fashion compliance. After another Andy disaster, Miranda coldly notes she had tried to circumvent just such failures by hiring, not the usual 'stylish, slender, of course' *Runway* fashionistas but, 'the smart, fat girl'. Andy leaves the room stung to tears. For this scene the stylists padded Hathaway to make her appear large and put her in a pale peachy coloured top to emphasise this.

Andy wanders off, finds Nigel and complains to him, but he challenges her superior attitude to fashion; she may believe she is working her hardest, but behaving as if fashion is beneath her will endear her to no one, least of all Miranda. In their DVD commentary the creative team assert it was important that Nigel didn't just take pity on Andy, but bothered to stop and upbraid her for her attitude to clothes. Interestingly they describe this in language which directly evokes and contradicts the role from Cinderella Nigel seems to play: 'He's not a fairy godmother in any way'. Given that the conversation between Andy and Nigel ends with her absorption of his criticism, and the realisation that she can prove her devotion to *Runway* by conforming to its aesthetic standards, this remark seems disingenuous. The scene ends with Andy beseechingly saying 'Nigel? Nigel!' and his firm 'No'. In keeping with the traditional comic trope, however, where a definite negative is instantly overthrown, the following scene opens with Nigel leading the way into the magic Closet where all the sample clothes sent to the magazine are stored. Though he protests they are bound to find nothing big enough for her (an American 6 and thus the equivalent of a UK 10) Nigel does amass an armful of goodies for Andy, significantly picking items he names by their designer: 'We're doing this Dolce for you, and shoes – Jimmy Choo's, Manolo Blahnik's … Nancy Gonzalez, mmm love that, and this is a Rodriguez, this we love … okay now Chanel, you're in desperate need of Chanel …'

Nigel then ushers her off to the beauty department. Andy returns to her office after her transformation and is now given her big moment; importantly the major change besides the removal of the padding and her new groomed hair, cut with a fringe instead of just lying bushily on her shoulders, is that she wears Chanel top to toe: a blazer, thigh-high leather boots, a skimpy top with sequins, and gold chains. Although the various fabrics used in the outfit – the shiny fetishistic leather balanced by the nubby material of micro mini skirt and blazer – are significantly eye-catching, it is the designer rather than the design that is really important at this point. Just to make sure the audience get that she is now dressed in designer couture, Emily falteringly asks 'How did … are you wearing the Ch …?' Andy smoothly anticipates her question and finishes it for her: 'The Chanel boots? Yes, I am'. In fact, this wardrobe transformation seems to have had an immediate effect on Andy's efficiency as, entering the office

in her new outfit she steps smartly to the ringing telephone and, for the first time in the film, answers it in the approved *Runway* fashion without seeming ill at ease. Andy, dressed thus, is for the first time unflappable.

If Andy astonishes Emily here with her sartorial metamorphosis, the next scene shows her boyfriend is no less amazed. He sees her waiting for him outside the restaurant where he works; as he looks in astonishment, a music track begins which then acts as a bridge into the next scene, a montage showing Andy going to work in successive fabulous outfits. The song is 'Vogue' by Madonna. While it has been noted previously that montages such as this, designed to show off the transformation outfits, generally use a catchy tune, here the lyrics of the song seem strangely at odds with the sentiment of the scene. Madonna's song contains the line 'Beauty's where you find it', and a mantra more oppositional to the *Runway* credo could hardly be imagined. I think the reason this song is used here, other than because it is bouncy and acts to move along the scene of Andy turning up at work in increasingly outré outfits, is as a sly reference to the film's source novel. If, as was widely hinted at the time, Lauren Weisberger's time at *Vogue* magazine inspired her to write the novel as a form of revenge against her own Miranda Priestly-type boss, Anna Wintour, then the film can be seen using this track as an oblique homage to that vengeance notion, confirming *Runway*, Andy's destination throughout the montage, as the film version of *Vogue*.

During the track, Andy's progress to work is filmed as if it were a single journey, repeating recognisable points of the trip she made during the opening credits; here the fact that these are actually iterative journeys is made plain by the different outfits she wears, changing whenever a vehicle passes or Andy goes down into or emerges from the subway: it is an economical device which shows that she is reaping the sartorial benefit of the *Runway* closet, even as the outfits she dons become more extreme fashionably: shorter, tighter and of richer fabrics.

The film continues to showcase Andy wearing a variety of couture; this is sometimes made evident by naming the designer and sometimes by the presence of the fashion house's well-known logo visible in the ensemble (such as the interlocking c's which indicate Chanel). The next 'big' wardrobe moment, however, is, by contrast, label-less. Miranda decides she needs not just Emily but also Andy with her at a lavish fashion benefit.

The scene is significant in several ways. It marks a further stage of Andy's enslavement to her job – she complies with Miranda's wishes and goes to the soirée despite it being Nate's birthday. As an evening formal event it puts Andy into full evening dress and thus speaks to the movie's Cinderella motif, especially when she encounters Christian on the stairs as she is departing – she doesn't lose her shoe, but the film does have her flee from him to meet a time-deadline. It also marks a point when her own regime of not eating, alluded to occasionally, begins to pay off: Andy, looking for Nigel and an evening gown in the closet finds he has something gorgeous for her:

Andy: I *love* that! Will it fit me?

Nigel: Oh yeah … a little Crisco and some fishing wire and we're in business.

This exchange reveals that the pair have become close enough for teasing; when Andy turns up at the benefit, however, Nigel halts his conversation to give her a definite look of approval at the fit. It seems significant that although Andy is wearing a designer (Galliano) at this point, the name of the couturier is not the focus of the scene – her princess moment is enshrined in the flattering shape of the dress, the soft delicate lacy over-sleeves that seem to caress her upper arms, and without the interruption of commerce and consumerism. Christian remarks, 'You're a vision', and the aim of the scene is to enforce this, not to pay its respects to a particular designer at this point. Of course Andy is wearing couture; the point is that she looks appropriately fabulous – and thin – in it.

When Miranda takes Andy and not Emily to Paris, she negotiates the hurdles of the job, pleasing Miranda, while also putting together her own outfits and finding time to romance Christian. As usual, when her wardrobe achievements are mentioned, it is Nigel to whom Andy plays. When he tells Andy about his new venture outside *Runway*, Andy toasts him with champagne and another one of their bantering exchanges follows:

Andy: Congratulations, Nigel: you deserve it.

Nigel: You bet your size six ass I –

The Devil Wears Prada 2: Are those the Chanel boots?

Andy: – Four!

Nigel: Really?…Let me see that!

Andy's weight loss has been a subtle, background, story; she has not been seen carrying out a dieting regime, but the combination of her constant frenzied activity, plus the absorbed lesson that *Runway* women must be thin, has obviously impacted on her and is the more insidious for being tacit.

Two final costumes of significance remain in the film. The contrast between the two could not, at first, seem greater: Andy goes from couture gown to leather jacket and jeans. But this seeming repudiation of the fashion world is more complex than it first appears.

Andy rushes to warn Miranda of the plot against her but is snubbed by her boss. Off screen she then changes for the next round of activities, dressing in a Louis Vuitton semi-formal outfit – back-accented dark green dress, short-sleeved black jacket, heels, diamonds, tiny gold bag – for the *Runway* lunch where Nigel's new job is to be announced. This is probably the most dressed up, the most couture, we have seen Andy, appropriately

enough because this is when her temptation is at its height. After giving Jacqueline Follet the job Nigel had wanted in order to safeguard her own, Miranda travels with her assistant to the next event. If Miranda is the Devil of the book and film's title, this is the occasion for her tempting the innocent Andy; as they ride through the glittering City of Light, Miranda seems to offer her protégée the world. And this is the moment that Andy, beautifully coiffed, made-up and dressed up as she is, wakes up. She realises that dictating others' outfits *and* lives is not why she got into publishing: she wanted to write. Walking away from the temptation offered here echoes her earlier rejection, at the *Runway* benefit, of Christian, who arrives as she departs. Although he dangles as bait before her the possibility of meeting his editor Andy resists that enticement; here too, practically offered a share of her world by Miranda Priestly, she simply walks away.

The final scene of the film shows Andy back in New York City and in what, compared to the costumes since her transformation, seem to be 'normal' clothes. She is being interviewed again, as in the film's opening scene, but now for the type of job she always wanted, on a reputable New York newspaper. As she walks through the Manhattan streets we are given a chance to see her outfit in detail: she wears a leather jacket, calf-length high-heeled boots over jeans, a black polo neck jumper and a pendant. Her hair is glossy and sleek, and she looks slender, chic and put together. Rejecting *Runway* has evidently not meant rejecting the lessons she has learnt about being judged at face value. Given that her tasks as Miranda's assistant mostly involved pouring Pellegrino, buying coffee and sourcing unsourceable objects, what Andy has told the editor about her time at *Runway* – 'learnt a lot' – seems at odds with her actual day-to-day experience. What she has actually learnt is that exteriors count and an intelligent woman is foolish to ignore them.

Considering the ways in which the traditional tropes of the transformation scene play out in this particular film, I will start here by looking not at the thematic, but at the visual tropes. All four of the common aesthetic elements used to mark the metamorphosis scene are present in *The Devil Wears Prada*, but it makes often innovative use of these. For example, it employs the staircase motif, but not at the precise moment of transformation. Both of the major important temptations of Andy are staged on or at the foot of staircases. In the first instance, Andy

is running away from the *Runway* party when she meets Christian going in; stopping on the stairs, both turn so they are facing away from where they are going, as they flirt around the topic of their mutual attraction. Christian offers what he hopes will be the clincher: if Andy won't stay and have a drink with *him*, will she talk to his boss, who is interested in her writing? Christian tries to sidestep the personal frisson between himself and Andy, luring her through her ambitions, but she resists. It is important to recognise that it is not Christian himself who is the temptation to Andy – if he were, we would judge her a failure when she later sleeps with him. The temptation the film portrays is that of fast-tracking her way to being a writer by cultivating contacts, and it is important for Andy's integrity that she refuses this.

The second moment of important staircase placement has Andy refuse to step onto the stairs at all. In Paris, after Miranda has seemingly offered her the world, Andy alights from the limousine and stares up at her boss engulfed by photographers and journalists. She again chooses not to take

The Devil Wears Prada 3: Height of temptation

the bait, and here, as Miranda visibly rises in front of her, going up the stairs, Andy rejects the notion of succeeding, getting on and getting up, the entire premise of Miranda's offer.

While some transformation moments choose to stage their 'big reveals' on a staircase, having the newly transfigured woman emerge in her new form, then slowly descend like a goddess coming down to earth to her adoring worshippers, *The Devil Wears Prada* chooses astutely to split these moments and to use the stairs in a divergent symbolic register. Perhaps because there are literally so many 'catwalk' moments staged on runways, the film wanted to avoid employing that metaphor here: Andy rejects the runway at the moment she rejects *Runway*.

Instead, Andy's personal apotheosis, when she appears in her new incarnation to the amazement of her on-screen audience, occurs in a far more fitting place: the office. Her failure at simple office tasks – answering the telephone, writing memos – has already been shown; now when she glides into the space, in slow-motion, in thigh highs, and in control, her first act is to take the *perfect* phone call. Andy's transformation may only consist of a few designer items and a sleeker haircut, but the difference in terms of her self-confidence is palpable, and aptly rendered by her languid strut, showcased in slow-mo as she tosses her new chic hair over one shoulder to a shimmering, magical-sounding riff on the soundtrack.

The film also uses the visual trope of the camera pan up the body and interestingly modulates its usual employment so that it happens not only when Andy's boyfriend appraises her but also when *Miranda* does. Nate's reaction is explored below in considering the film's use of the misrecognition moment; Miranda's comes during the montage of costume changes which accompanies 'Vogue' on the soundtrack. With the last outfit change, when Andy is wearing a velvet coat, mini dress and high boots, she readies Miranda's desk and then exits as Miranda enters the room. The camera pans up her body in the approved manner for noting a costume improvement: that this is Miranda's point of view, rather than a man's, underlines the fact that it is a job Andy is changing for, rather than the usual aim of gaining a partner. This pan up her body – which is underlined by Miranda turning her head to watch Andy leave the room – echoes and answers the disapproving pan down her figure, the 'Florian tilt', which Miranda gave earlier. There it was used not just to showcase the shoes, as

The Devil Wears Prada 4: Ameliorated glamour

the commentary suggests, but to signal Miranda's awareness of Andy failing to fit in. The look up her body now confirms Andy has got it right. Andy's reactions to the two appreciative pans reveal her real interest and ambitions: while she is pleased at Nate's response to her change, her face seems to be glowing with pride and excitement when she walks from Miranda's room knowing her boss has given her the 'once-over' of appreciation.

Besides these visual tropes, *The Devil Wears Prada* also employs many of the thematic elements of the film-based transformation, and its omissions are easy to fathom. For example, the main trope it excludes from its schema is the visible transformation. This is calculatedly not shown, as the point of the film is to erase the work needed to turn Andy 'from geek to chic'.[15] In order to underline its message, the wardrobe alteration has to occur off screen, and thus the film makes use of the invisible transformation. When Andy reappears after her transformation, to the chagrin of Emily and the

frank admiration of Serena, the work necessary to render her a couture version of herself has been accomplished off screen, in the edit between leaving the Closet and arriving in the office. In using this trope the film *almost* employs the shopping motif also, although there is one significant difference between the scene in which Andy gathers her armfuls of designer goodies and that in, say, *Gold Diggers of 1937*: there is no money involved. This is shopping at its most magical and fantasy-fulfilling, since the accumulation of consumables costs nothing.

There is also obvious employment of the misrecognition moment. After Andy's transformation, the scene cuts to the exterior of the restaurant where Nate works. He is coming out; Andy is leaning against a car waiting for him. As he walks by, he checks her out as he would any attractive female, and carries on walking. Then he comes to a halt, slowly looks back at her, and the camera gives us the slow pan-up of approval as he takes in her changed appearance. When Andy asks, 'So, what do you think?', his answer perfectly enshrines the totality of the metamorphosis: 'I think we better get out of here before my girlfriend sees me with you!' Andy is so different, she is not just improved, but seems a totally different person. However, the film attempts to prove that Nate is wrong in this assumption; and this may be the reason that the couple does not end the film together. It is crucial to the way the film shapes Andy's trajectory and alters its source novel that the young woman has not become a different person but – again employing the 'true self' motif so frequently found – is at last letting her exterior reflect her authentic interior.

This emphasis on the 'true self' trope is the way the film attempts to put across its message, not just to Andy, but to the audience also. In order for this message to be effective, the film needs to couple the invisible transformation with the idea of one's authentic identity being released – rather than changed – by the proper outfitting. To this end, it sets out to make Andy's metamorphosis seem as natural as possible. This is not done in the same way as Calam's alteration, through an inevitable maturation and gradual relinquishing of immature tomboy ways. Instead, this is achieved by altering the heroine of the book through her wardrobe, the film's method of adapting its source text. It is through her attitude to her appearance that *The Devil Wears Prada* subjects the character of Andrea Sachs to a comprehensive shift. Book Andy begins her slavery at *Runway* indifferent

about fashion, and leaves the same way – clueless and unskilled. Film Andy starts unkempt and uncaring, but not without the potential for sartorial salvation. Unlike her novel counterpart, she learns how to dress, put together a chic ensemble, apply mascara; and this latter moment is dwelt on as a telling close-up cues a flashback: in her hotel room in Paris, Andy contemplates the distance she has travelled between her interview day and the present moment amidst the glamour of Paris Fashion Week.

Unlike both *The Bride Wore Red* and *Calamity Jane*, where the costume narratives acted at times to undermine and subvert the dominant narrative trajectories, *The Devil Wears Prada* operates its dominant and costume narratives in tandem. This film uses its costume plot not as an oppositional discourse to the dominant narrative of the film, but as an oppositional discourse to the source novel. The schematised wardrobe changes are not merely indicative of the central character's trajectory – they are its *materialisation*. The costume discourse establishes itself as such an integral part of the narrative that it becomes the primary method of adapting the novel and its heroine to the screen, achieving a volte-face on the book's final refutation of fashion. While Print Andy ultimately rejects fashion, *Runway*, and Miranda Priestly, Screen Andy introjects the lessons she has learnt during her tenure at the magazine. After Miranda, Book Andy reverts comfortably to weight gain and wearing the same pair of (non-designer) jeans every day for a week; Film Andy, while in jeans, looks as slim, chic, groomed and accessorised as at the height of her *Runway* time.

By thus reversing the conclusion of the novel, the film version of *The Devil Wears Prada* valorises not fashion per se – as Andy's more extreme outfits have indicated, this is not really suitable for 'real life' – but the duty of attractive self-presentation. In doing so the film renders its central character a more mature young woman than the whiney self-justifier who inhabits the book, slyly changing the tenor of the text from *roman à clef* as a mode of revenge, to a *bildungsroman* as an act of advertising. And what is being advertised is the same version of the American dream Brenda Weber found infusing *Extreme Makeover*: the idea that every woman should make the best of herself; that this best involves a glamorised appearance; and that this appearance supports *national* consumerism.

If Andy, a smart but averagely (un)stylish recent graduate can learn enough about clothes to pass muster in the cut-throat world of high

fashion then, the film suggests, with a little help and a little luck – and a little diet – so could we all. Andy's easy absorption of the *Runway* ethos, which takes place in a single edit and suffers no backsliding, promises the audience that any woman who takes hold of her life, pays attention and swears off fried cheese sandwiches can become more glamorous. The work of Nigel and the *Runway* beauty professionals who cut Andy's hair and give her a sophisticated makeup, *must* then be invisible to play to the twin and paradoxically linked fantasies such films foster: that such changes are magical (hence Andy's show-stopping entrance, the shimmering music on the soundtrack, the slow-motion strutting and hair tossing) and, because they involve no evident work, *easy*.

Furthermore, while Andy has been toiled over in the makeup and hair departments, the overall effect is not of *difference* (the makeover) but *improvement* (the make-better). This is an essential factor in the film's project. For the Andy of the final scene to have learnt a permanent lesson, the glamour and attractiveness have to be inherent within clueless Andy. The transformation of the heroine that Nigel assists, then, does not represent change so much as evolution. I think this is the ultimate reason the film neglects to show the transformation process itself – because by not revealing the workings of the transformation it will seem more organic. The film's project is to reveal that Andy was *always* a high-fashion princess inside; not showing the process required to render her thus outwardly makes this seem all the more plausible.

It is interesting to ponder whether *The Devil Wears Prada* presents Andy's transformation as a false one, and thus employs this common motif of the metamorphosis film also. While it does show her adapting to, and indeed relishing, the haute couture she is allowed to borrow from the Closet, the film eventually hints that this is not the *real* Andy, again utilising the 'true self' trope as a touchstone to guide viewer understanding of the choices she makes. Andy's transformation is then a false one inasmuch as she does not maintain her allegiance to designers such as Dolce and Gabbana, Azrouel and Galliano once she has left *Runway*, rejecting these labels' extreme couture which she wears during her Paris trip. Instead, the film posits there are levels of transformation for Andy, beginning with her catwalk moment when she strides in slow-motion and grace into her office in Chanel.

This scene, as has been noted above, is carefully crafted to make her alteration seem natural and easy, a glamorising rather than a total revolution. As noted, Emily name-checks the designer so that the audience is in no doubt that Andy, who Nigel proclaimed was 'in desperate need of Chanel' has found some, and is wearing it to great effect. After this scene the outfits she wears become more and more haute and heavily accented as designer, either by literally revealing the label or by their extremity as office wear – the Calvin Klein dress, the mini skirt with velvet coat. This commitment to extreme fashion reaches its zenith, appropriately, as Andy reaches the height of trying to be the perfect assistant, in Paris with Miranda. Wearing the highest heels, the tightest skirts and the most plunging necklines, Andy here almost succumbs to the seduction of *Runway*, and Miranda.

Andy has to learn, in that other favourite transformation trope, to ameliorate the extremity of her outfits, to dial down the haute of her couture to something approaching a more everyday level. In a review of *The Devil Wears Prada* in *Cineaste*, Martha Nochimson concludes that instead of opting, as the heroines of 1980s career women movies do, for the 'mommy track' at the end of the movie, Andy chooses 'the dowdy track' (Nochimson 2006: 50). I do not think the film shows Andy as dowdy, however; at the film's conclusion she seems not rejecting glamour, so much as excess, toning her look down to a level more appropriate to her current circumstances. She does not revert to the big-haired, multi-coloured slouch of the earliest scenes; as she strides confidently off through Manhattan in her cigarette jeans and stiletto-heeled boots, her outfit may be casual but is also stylish. And I think that the labels she promotes in this final outfit are chosen intentionally as part of the film's ultimate message to the viewer.

Kirk Honeycutt's review of the film in *The Hollywood Reporter* criticises the movie for an unresolved ambivalence towards the world of high fashion:

> It eventually becomes clear that there is method to Miranda's madness: Her incessant demands are tests to purge staff members who are not up to her own ruthless quest for perfection. Indeed the virtuous moral at the movie's end – that this is no way to live a good life – feels hallow [sic] because the film displays an unmistakable ambivalence toward *Runway*. With its grudging admiration for fashion-fabulous costumes and for

> this glamorous lifestyle, the film idolises that which it would skewer. (Honeycutt: 2006)

While I take Honeycutt's point, I think the film is intending to make a distinction between the 'fashion-fabulous' costumes it endorses, and those it considers too outré to be useful. If Andy is our 'Everygirl', then the outfit in which she ends the film is the important one. She has not, like her book counterpart, reverted to wearing the same pair of jeans every day for weeks,[16] nor has she seemingly gained back any of the weight the *Runway* regime skimmed off her. Albeit in more casual mode, she is still wearing designer labels: her brown leather jacket is by Vince,[17] her black turtleneck sweater is a DKNY design and her chocolate suede stiletto boots are Calvin Klein. Significantly, all these designers are American. If, as Weber suggests, it is an American woman's patriotic duty to look her best, and to commit financial resources to doing so, then it is surely also her duty to support American designers when she is out shopping?

The over-the-top designs and outfits that Andy models in the office and then in Paris are fabulous but they are also free: she could not hope to afford them on a salary either from *Runway* or from her new writing job. American designers' couture may be too pricey also but their diffusion and high-street lines are affordable and patriotic buys, however. *The Devil Wears Prada* thus takes Andy from her college-era wardrobe of thrift store 'American simple' up to the dizzy and rarefied heights of European haute couture and then slightly down again to more sensible levels of attainable chic from American labels. Three films have been looked at in detail in these case studies. *The Bride Wore Red*, *Calamity Jane* and *The Devil Wears Prada* were chosen because each seems to exemplify how Hollywood films have consistently been interested in exploring and exploiting the connections between costume and transformation. They each also offer opportunities to see both the frequency – almost, it seems, the *inevitability* – of presenting the internal metamorphosis within the narrow range of traditional externalised tropes, and the specific ways in which the transformation theme resonated with the particular social and historical contexts of the films' producing times.

For all three films, the intricate involvement of the star persona and the transformation trope proved to be an unexpected but inescapable finding. While Day has associations of maturation and chronologically

expected changes within her resonances, both Crawford and Hathaway, although ostensibly such different types and from such different historical periods, both proved to have 'the makeover' as a major recurrent element in their films and screen personae, a point underlined by the frequency with which press compared both of them to Cinderella.

The idea of a separate 'costume narrative' existing in a mainstream film and serving sometimes to underline, and sometimes undermine, characterisation or narrative points advanced by the dominant story trajectory was borne out by all the studied films, with all three proving to be fascinatingly ambivalent texts. *The Bride Wore Red* attempted to condemn its heroine Anni for using her sexuality to get ahead, to get a man and to get wealth, but firstly in casting energetic Crawford and then in dressing her in Adrian's ravishing red beaded gown, the film sent very mixed messages about the behaviour for women it would deem more appropriate. The film also notably failed to punish Anni for her transgressions: while it removed her shot at riches, it gave her the love of her life, whom she would never have met if not masquerading as a fine lady – which the film attempts to censure. Above all, the use of the red gown as an index of undesirable femininity was a bizarre and doomed concept given its modern shape, richness and suitability for Crawford's form.

In *Calamity Jane* the costume narrative is again at odds with the dominant trajectory since this wants to see her androgyny and agency safely confined in a bustled frock, but this goal is circumvented by the fact that the emotional highlight comes not when the heroine has been trussed up in her wedding dress, but in the scene before, while Calam, still dressed in trousers, proclaims her 'Secret Love'.

The two films thus work to destabilise the dominant narrative trajectory, and use their costume schema as a way of letting ambivalent messages and unresolved issues into the text. By contrast, *The Devil Wears Prada* runs its costume and dominant narratives in concert, using costume's potential for fostering an oppositional discourse to counteract the thrust not of the film's story, but that of the original source novel. Thus working in tandem, the costume plot and the main story seek to subvert the book's total rejection of fashion, turning it instead into a dismissal of European haute couture excess and a valorisation of American designers.

In addition, all three costume narratives suggest that Gaines' tenet, that the costume plot 'cannot anticipate narrative developments' is often invalid. These three films consistently allow costume to forecast the narrative ahead, and, in particular, the sartorial transformation which their heroine will undertake. The opening scene of *The Devil Wears Prada*, cutting 'American simple' Andy against the 'fashion-fabulous' women neatly highlights the distance between the *Runway* women and the aspiring writer as well as indicating that this is a journey she will make during the course of the film. Calam's recourse to clean white clothing, whenever hurt by Bill's personal remarks about her androgyny, becomes a decisive element in her own choice of clothing after rejecting the false transformation urged on her by Katie; the small amounts of white shirt shown under her dirty deerskins increase in stages to culminate in her wedding dress; thus again her selection of that pristine garment, worn next to her skin, almost as protection against Bill's slights, acts as a forecast of outfits and attitudes to come. Finally, Anni's whole story is, in effect, predicted to the audience at the very start of the film, when her modelled figure appears, dominant and vital, in peasant gear, towering over the mountains and little towns on the music box. Although this is not the first outfit we see the human Anni wearing, the impact of the model on the box is sufficient to suggest to the audience this is an outfit we will be seeing again and which will have great narrative significance. Not only is this, then, the dress Anni is wearing when she secures a marriage proposal from Rudi, it is also what she wears, disgraced and ostracised at the end of the film, when Giulio claims her.

In the theory section of this work, we saw how Jane Gaines' ideas that design and fabric could carry their own symbolism was borne out; in the three case studies too, the particular qualities of a choice of cloth or silhouette have proved to be significant. In Anni's case, the Bride who attempts to Wear Red on the evening of her marriage dons a far more demure, bridal-type gown on her first evening at the hotel; this outfit acts as a type of displacement of the innocent attire she should put on as a bride, and it attracts both Rudi and Giulio's attention. The softness, sheerness and yielding fragility of the gown imply similar qualities belong to Anni herself – quite erroneously. A similar use of a white gown can be seen in *Calamity Jane*, but there the design symbolism is used to mark Calam off

from the other fashionable Deadwood ladies, as her dress is much more columnar, and less festooned with the apron-like swag at the front than the others, as well as, perhaps, to reinforce the idea that her phallic and active body has not been totally tamed by the act of putting on a dress. Both fabric and design can be seen, finally, in *The Devil Wears Prada*, to be offering hints about the wearer; in Andy's final outfit, for instance, her leather jacket, albeit a designer one, has a few of the overtones of 'street' and 'rebel' which traditionally accompany such a garment (there would be more if the jacket had been black – that would have more clearly spelled 'rock n roll'). Alongside the armour-like leather, which Andy has perhaps donned as a mechanism to defend herself in her interview, she also wears a black polo neck very much in keeping with the idea of an intellectual; this outfit spells 'writer' as much as other costumes worn by Andy after her transformation signified 'fashion lackey'.

What I hope the case studies have shown is how films telling the story of inner and outer transformation in Hollywood have come to rely on a series of motifs and elements which they use and re-use, sometimes with knowing glee. These visual and thematic tropes have both maintained a consistency across the wide historical period examined, and found new ways to engage with the specific times and societal impulses prompting the films themselves. Close attention paid to these scenes of metamorphosis can illuminate ambivalences and uncertainties about how successfully clothes can – and should – render our inner 'true selves' outwardly. Without concentration on the costume narratives in our case studies, for example, we might share the dissatisfaction with which successive generations of critics have viewed *The Bride Wore Red* and felt that the conclusion of *Calamity Jane* definitively closes down the heroine's active identity. *The Devil Wears Prada* similarly shows that costume can be the method by which an adaptation of a well-known source novel can become not so much a rendering in another medium as a total subversion of its intentions.

conclusion

The prevalence of the transformation theme throughout various decades and genres of Hollywood cinema has been explored in this book, along with the accompanying notion these films foster, that exterior changes can impact on the interior identity of the woman who undergoes them. As has been examined, Hollywood films have found a variety of ways to suggest that such external changes are necessary, even salutary, and simultaneously promoted mechanisms, like the 'true self' idea, to mitigate the anxieties the very fluid self seemingly proposed by such films creates in turn.

What fascinates and intrigues me more than anything, I think, with these films, is the way they seem at once both to respond to specific historical moments and to maintain a very unchanging thematic and aesthetic mode of telling and showing the metamorphosis stories. Perhaps it is the genius of capitalism that makes the triangulation of Hollywood cinema, costume and self-improvement through consumables a perennially perfect fit.

At the beginning of this book I compared two film artefacts, one very early and one recent, and found elements of continuity in the transformation theme running through them despite their differences in practically every other respect. In closing, I now consider another pair of artefacts, sundered in time, but joined in the seeming belief that the transmutation of the self through exterior alteration is an exciting and positive act for a woman.

The June 1939 issue of *Screenland* carries an article on Joan Bennett entitled 'Brunette vs Blonde?' In this, the writer, Kay Proctor, gushingly describes the overwhelming changes that have occurred in the actor's career – and life – since she decided to dye her hair – originally 'mousy' (29), then made blonde under a fiat from Bennett's studio boss Samuel

Goldwyn – dark brown. As a brunette, Bennett is described as having had her whole personality altered; things she loved, she now dislikes, things she had avoided she now craves:

> … Joan found herself changing in many ways. Colors she formerly had liked now definitely antagonise her. The same is true of materials, jewelry, perfume and furs … But most important, she has discovered strange changes in her own personality and thoughts, in her reactions to people and their reactions to her. Joan Bennett is a new person, and all because of a pot of dye! (28–29)

In the interview with Bennett, Proctor neatly balances a fashion article about today's must-have items in the latest colours – achieved via the pictures and their lengthy captions that accompany the piece – with a more vaguely psychological piece about the mystic changes that have come with Bennett's hair change. Not only has Joan changed her sartorial 'type' by forsaking the brassy blonde, necessitating an expensive change of wardrobe, she seems to have changed her personality through adopting darker hair:

> … she found her reactions to life infinitely more exciting, stimulating and satisfying … 'That is not as far-fetched as it may sound,' Joan explained. 'Almost every woman has experienced a strange change in her spirit and morale, for example, merely by wearing a certain color. Perhaps it makes her feel younger, or more alluring, or gayer, or imbued with an unexpected self confidence for no particular reason. I found wearing darker hair did unexpected things to me, and things I liked.' (31)

The article goes on to detail more changes in Bennett's life since her hair colour alteration, and a tacit message seems to emerge. Although a paragraph talks about how much more *ladylike* Bennett now seems without her brassy chorus-girl colour – 'her new quiet poise of a gentlewoman … she belong[s] behind the tea table in a gracious drawing room' (84) – and another notes that her deep and husky voice now matches her appearance, the real transformation seems to have been an increased sexualisation, interestingly linked to augmented feelings of agency and control in Bennett herself:

> She is conscious of a new adventurous spirit … she now is driven by sly urgings to take chances, gamble on things, try her wings a little … And

> finally there is her new 'umph', that all-important quality in a woman be she blonde, brunette, or redhead. If darkening her hair hasn't increased Joan's sex attraction, a lot of men have been dialing her number for the sheer fun of playing with the telephone. (84)

There is something suggestive in the image conjured up of men 'playing with the telephone' which entirely fits with the tone of the article; it seems to be trying to let its readers know that Bennett has become more sexually alluring and powerful through this significant change without spelling out her new possession of an inappropriately unfeminine magnetism. Interestingly, the article tells readers that they will be able to judge for themselves how successful the new hair is in a forthcoming film – 'Watch for her in "The Man in the Iron Mask"' (84): – but does not belabour the point that her new hair colour was first adopted for a film part and has subsequently won her a different type of role. Bennett went on in the 1940s to star in a number of *films noirs* in which she often played the dark and smouldering, sexually powerful and ambivalently motivated femme fatale, including *The Woman in the Window* (1944), *Scarlet Street* (1945) and *Secret Beyond the Door* (1948). Her hair change thus allowed her to move into different and more complex roles than before, during her chorus-girl blonde stage. Both career-wise and in her personal life, then, the simple use of 'four minutes' time and a $15.00 pot of dye' (84) had a transformatory effect on Bennett. With a new wardrobe and new hair, she acquired a new more sexualised persona and acknowledged this in the magazine, albeit in ameliorated, slightly coded language which hinted rather than flaunted her increased success ('she feels more "aware" of herself as a woman and has noticed an exciting response from men…') (84).

Sixty-nine years later, an article in *Allure* magazine unconsciously revisited the scenario in which Bennett had found herself, with uncannily similar results. Although *Allure*'s article, 'Making Change' by Cara Litke, underlines that it is dealing with 'Real-life women' rather than movie stars, the terms in which the results of the makeovers are discussed entirely echo the experience reported for Bennett; as the feature considers eight women involved in 'revamping their most defining skin, hair, and makeup looks' (2008: 114), the language used to describe their reactions to the changes is reminiscent not only of the *Screenland* article but also evokes images and moments from the transformation scenes described in this book, even down

to referencing *The Devil Wears Prada*,[1] as well as portraying the changes and their agents in terms reminiscent of the source myths and fairy tales on which movie metamorphoses have always drawn.[2]

The article starts by assuring the reader that an exterior transformation has an effect that goes beyond merely skin-deep; like the transformation moments shown so often in Hollywood cinema, there is asserted to be an intimate connection between the exterior and the interior:

> A makeover may start with a physical change, but it often reaches beyond the confines of the mirror. A new look can alter how others see you – and how you see yourself. 'Updating an aspect of your appearance is an easy way to help improve your self-image,' says hairstylist Mark Townsend of the Sally Hershberger Downtown Salon in New York City and the Byron Williams Studio in Los Angeles. 'It can bring a woman out of her shell and change her personality completely – I've seen it happen'.
>
> That's especially true when the makeover affects a distinctive part of a woman's aesthetic, altering her image and self-image in one fell swoop. 'When someone who's had brown hair all her life becomes a blonde, her color isn't the only thing that's affected – her clothes, her makeup, and even the way she walks shift, too', says colorist Rita Hazan, owner of the Rita Hazan salon in New York City. (Litke: 116)

While in this introductory paragraph the specific hair colour change described is brunette to blonde, the exemplar transformation dealt with in the pages of the feature goes the other way, repeating the Bennett alteration of blonde to brunette. Julie Dobson, an executive at a swimming pool company (117) explains that she has been dying her mousy hair for years but has tired of its high maintenance. This very closely resembles Bennett's first inclination to go brunette – becoming tired of having to retouch her roots so often (Proctor: 30). Each of the makeovers in the *Allure* article divides into different sections: 'What she wanted'; 'What she got' and 'What she learned'. With Julie, this latter is again evocative of what Bennett had learnt almost seventy years previously:

> What she learned: I feel much more confident as a brunette, and I don't look in the mirror half as often or worry about the awful roots. The color also looks really good with my skin tone – I haven't wanted to go tanning since I dyed my hair, and that's major for me. And it feels thicker and

> healthier than it did when it was blonde. The best part is that my sisters, who know me best, said that they think my new brown hair fits my personality better. (117)

Bennett's increased 'awareness of herself as a woman' is very like Dobson's increased 'confidence'; and, in true transformation style, the dramatic alteration turns out not to be a *change* so much as a *confirmation*: the woman's 'true self' is revealed by the new hair colour, as attested by those who know her best.

I have drawn attention to these two non-filmic artefacts to show both that the language and imagery of the transformation moment has remained remarkably consistent over a substantial period and that it has succeeded in saturating other media in addition to the cinematic, while still using the filmic imagery as its keynotes. John Ellis in 'Stars as a cinematic phenomenon' (1982) suggests that extra-cinematic information on film stars, such as magazine articles and photographs, acts 'as an invitation to cinema' (598) because only there can the favoured star be seen in *motion*. We can add to this that while these artefacts point their way towards the cinema so that it can supply what they cannot, the reverse movement is also needed, as the film cannot halt the image and enable the viewer to gaze perpetually uninterrupted by narrative and action at the admired star. The circularity of this happy relationship between film and star-based artefacts ensures that sales continue to be made – both of film tickets and of extra-filmic material, from photographs to magazines and even to artefacts – in an endless round in which each new purchase piques, rather than satiates, the appetite for the star experience; it also reminds me very much of the rapport which exists between transformation moments in film and the consumables showcased there as being both at once personality-changing and identity-affirming, accessing the 'true self'.

Micki McGee's argument then (2005), that American consumers have been particularly enjoined to shop their way to happiness at times of crisis in the state, which chimes with Brenda Weber's (2005) notion of the zeitgeisty nature of *Extreme Makeover*, runs up against a problem: however the country's economy is doing, whatever the threats from without or within, women have always been told that they need to buy something new to wear, both to render them into the latest incarnation of the desirable (or appropriate) female archetype and simultaneously to return them to the

real selves they somehow, at some point, let slip away. While it is thus easy to point to the Depression of the 30s and the economic downturn of the early noughties as factors in the metamorphosis injunctions in two of this book's case studies, Anni and Andy's stories, it is not so easy to ascribe societal anxiety over money problems to the third, Calam's narrative. The affluent 1950s seem to me, by contrast, to be able to afford – in both senses – to insist on certain types of passive femininity, as mandated by conduct literature, which impacts on the approved model of womanhood Calam is exhorted to follow. Abundance, rather than scarcity, seems the driving force of the alterations prompted by a film like *Calamity Jane*. What this differing economic background to a transformation narrative suggests, then, is that Hollywood will always be happy to urge magical alteration via some sort of purchasing.

What also seems perpetually applicable within these films is the nature of the relationship of exterior to interior, and the invocation of a narrow range of origin stories: the natural maturation idea (caterpillar to butterfly), the Pygmalion tale, in which the male artist-lover is the agent of change for the woman, and the Cinderella narrative, where the downtrodden young lady of noble birth is restored to her rightful place in society through marriage to her handsome prince, enabled by a magical transformation by her Fairy Godmother which allows her to be seen by others as she really is inside. Throughout all these source tales it is taken as obvious that the changing of the female's exterior renders her desirable to the superior male, who will confirm the success of her transformation by choosing her above other women.

One major question not answered in this exploration of the transformation story in Hollywood cinema is whether the man can ever be the subject of the alteration, in the same way as the woman so frequently is. While another volume would be needed to do this question justice, it can be confidently answered that men have been portrayed as needing change in mainstream films during the same span of Hollywood cinema. The tropes and elements that make up the female alteration story so frequently, however, are found in different combinations or are entirely absent: the traditional emphasis on the man as the agent within the story is clearly problematised by a tale that renders him passively made-over into an altered state. Despite this reluctance to devote the same emphasis and

aesthetic to the male transformation tale, however, it is noticeable that the masculine metamorphosis via sartorial change seems to be becoming more common. The year 2008 gave us *Hancock*, *Wanted*, *Iron Man* and *21*, in all of which the central male character changes his outward costume to reflect inner alterations he feels have occurred, or, indeed, to induce them.

I want to look here in brief, now, at how the Hollywood transformation story is affected by having a male centre, instead of a female one; what kinds of accommodations does it have to make to its aesthetic, to its themes, in order to portray the story of a man whose costume change seems to impact on his inner self? What kinds of tensions are caused by admitting that there are indeed such men? While women have obviously been the target of interludes and almost whole films advocating the transcendent power of shopping, the notion of the 'true self' has arisen to mitigate against the anxieties caused by thoughts of their over-pliability. What kind of torsions will the story have to perform in order to prevent implying that men have such malleable identities that they can be adapted just through purchasing and donning different clothing?

Films which overtly or tacitly depict the story of the improvement in men's exterior are rarer in Hollywood cinema but can be found; while, as we have seen, the traditional female-centred story which depicts a sartorial transformation sends out the message – to both characters and audience – that wearing fabulous clothes is good, shopping for clothes is good, and that it is always one's duty to look one's best, these injunctions are not directed in so bold a manner at male characters. In fact, an improvement in the male wardrobe seems inevitably accompanied by a decline in morality, which has definitely no part in the women's transformation trajectory.

Male-centred transformation stories maintain the connection between inside and outside, interior identity and exterior appearance, but whereas, in the female-centred tale, any transformation will inevitably be presented not as one that brings her new beauty but that brings out the beauty that was always dormant inside, with the man's story, attention to the exterior means neglect of the interior. Where the female transformation brought inner and outer beings into alignment, the interior and exterior are connected in a different manner for men: they are still connected but obliquely, so that narratively the elevation of one necessitates the decline of the other.

Thus even in the transformation moment, a scene enshrining narcissism and self-regard in Hollywood films, the impetus against portraying men through their clothes is strong: a space which allows characters (and thus audiences) to tap into their fantasies of self-improvement seems barred for men, since the inevitable consequences of superior clothing seem to be inferior morality. Men are thus blocked from enjoying the dream of simple sartorial self-improvement which the transformation scene fosters for women: their attention should be elsewhere, the films imply, puritanically punishing those who allow themselves to be concerned with costume, and thus tying back to a tacit injunction against male narcissism.

I'd like to look in depth at an example which bears out this stance, and have chosen *A Place in the Sun* (1951), directed by George Stevens, partly because of its status as an exemplary classic Hollywood film, partly also because of the attention Maureen Turim paid to its costuming in her 'Designing Women' article, as considered earlier. Turim, it will be remembered, asserts the film is robbed of the critique of the destructive power of capitalism inherent in its source, Theodore Dreiser's novel *An American Tragedy* (1925), due to the distracting beauty of the costumes designed by Edith Head for Elizabeth Taylor's character, Angela. While I admire Turim's article, I think perhaps the Edith Head gowns have seduced her attention too. It is very noticeable that, if the costumes for Angela do not have the novel's contempt for capitalism sewn into them, the wardrobe for the hero, George Eastman, does. His sartorial changes contain a significant relation to the source novel's mistrust of wealthy finery, to the extent that *A Place in the Sun* can flippantly be described as the story of a man whose character gets worse as his wardrobe gets better.

The film introduces us to its hero, George Eastman (Montgomery Clift) during the opening credit sequence: we start the film seeing a man in the distance hitchhiking, he comes nearer and nearer always with his back to us, facing the oncoming traffic. Eventually, just as the credits end, the film teases us no longer but allows us the full sight of Montgomery Clift's face. Although he looks attractive, if rebellious, in his white tee shirt, black leather jacket and trousers, he does not look elegant, and yet he already has a yearning to do so.

In the film's back-story, George had met his wealthy uncle, who had promised to help him out in a career. Believing him, George has given up his menial job and hitchhiked across country to his uncle's town, hoping for a job in his swimsuit factory. After he has spoken to his uncle on the phone and been invited up to the house, George's first move is to go shopping. He is aware that his leather jacket is not the correct attire to wear to his uncle's house for an evening cocktail, so he splurges what we must assume are some of his last dollars on a tweedy suit. George projects himself across the glass – and class – barrier of the shop window into a fantasy of acceptance by his rich relatives. In a slow fade, the film shows

A Place in the Sun: George covets tweeds

how unfounded this fantasy is: changing slowly from the mannequin … not into George himself but into George's cousin Earl.

The film seems to mock the 'transformation' convention that would hold that changes of clothing and status are accompanied across a fade like this – the heroine often gazes, desires, purchases and transforms in the space of an editing trick. But *A Place in the Sun* shows us that it is not that simple – the audience is wrong-footed in its idea that George will appear in the next shot sartorially elevated. Instead we see Earl, who holds himself erect with the same grace as the mannequin, but significantly is dressed in the correct clothes for evening wear. The film achieves a complex mingling of effects; it both mocks Earl, as nothing more than a stuffed dummy, at the same time as undercutting George, showing how mistaken his desires are. He can project himself into the tweeds, but not into the gentlemanly status and 'old money' confidence he thinks they will convey, because tweeds are 'wrong' for the evening. The Eastman relatives judge George, hold him off from themselves, because of this same type of rubric, the etiquette that dictates what is worn at certain times of day and for certain events, yet this only piques his ambition to be like them still further.

George's tweed suit is out of place for cocktails and seems equally unsuitable for the manual labour he finds himself undertaking at the Eastman factory. Cast back again into his white tee shirt, he finds himself more confident. Working with his hands in boxing up swimsuits, George's tee shirt shows off his physique and good looks, enough to capture the attention of Alice Tripp (Shelley Winters) whom he soon begins to date.

But George's morals are declining as his fortunes improve. Moved up to a desk job in the factory, with his uncle pleased with him and rich Angela his new girl, George's confidence grows in bounds and he finally buys the right outfit for an evening party, entering his uncle's house at last wearing the right clothes and with the right accessory – a beautiful heiress – on his arm. Mingling with Angela and her wealthy friends introduces George to exciting new sartorial opportunities: clothes for boating, clothes for horse riding, clothes for a Polynesian themed dinner, clothes for afternoon casual strolling. George is wearing such a casual outfit when he meets Alice again – she has seen him in the society pictures of the newspaper and gone to meet him, threatening to tell Angela about her relationship with George – and their imminent baby.

Playing for time, George takes Alice out for the afternoon; he hires a small boat, and takes her out on a deserted lonely lake … Although he changes his mind about killing her, the boat capsizes and Alice drowns anyway. George flees, but is captured and put on trial. Here the smart suit he dons cannot help him: his aping of the costume of his 'betters' only underlines his ambition to join them and furthers the motive he has for doing away with the working-class girl who would have tied him to his origins. George's final outfit is his prison uniform. He has sunk below the level at which he started – the white tee and leather jacket – and is uncomfortably outfitted and badly coiffed by the prison in which he spends his last days before his execution.

George's sartorial fortunes and his moral ones are linked but in an inverse ratio, so the better dressed he is the more dissembling and grasping is his character; unlike the more common female transformation which encourages the woman to improve her appearance, the male transformation, as evinced in *A Place in the Sun*, works in a different way, condemning the man who is shallow enough to be concerned, as is George, with wearing the right garment, the right fabric, to the right event. While Maureen Turim finds the film buying into the capitalism that its source novel condemns, because of the beautiful costumes of the central woman, I think we can see in the trajectory of the central *man's* wardrobe that the film preserves Dreiser's distaste for consumerism.

A Place in the Sun thus maintains the traditional trajectory associated with those films which use the transformation story, but with one significant alteration: while the woman's tale seems to be a rise in fortunes, marital, sexual, financial, once she puts on the correct apparel, here we have a rise and fall, more like the customary arc of the gangster film. Perhaps the American dream aspect of the sartorial transformation is appropriate only for the women of the nation.

The film can however be seen employing some of the same tropes in the telling of its tale of wardrobe improvement. It does not contain a scene in which George is witnessed by the viewer trying to improve his looks and fortunes. Instead, the more common invisible transformation trope is used; here not for its ability to make change seem both magical and natural, but to highlight with greater poignancy (or satirical edge, depending on one's sympathies for George) his attempts to fit in, and his failures. George is

given a moment which tallies with the shopping scenes in the women-centred films: instead of their agency in picking and choosing this or that garment and accessory, he is passively observed staring spellbound through a shop window. It does seem poignant that the tweedy outfit seems to him at this point the acme of elegance and style, yet when he purchases it and puts it on, he seems shrunken within it, and one can imagine the coarse and itchy fabric irritating his skin by the way he holds himself uncomfortably in the suit, while the snooty Eastmans surround him in their impeccable evening wear.

I noted above that the film seems sufficiently aware of the conventions of filmic transformations to tease the viewer. The shot of George gazing at the suit, followed by the very slow dissolve, should encapsulate the desired change, but, as stressed above, it is Earl and not George who appears at the other end of the dissolve. The film continues its conscious use and inflection of other transformation tropes with its take on the misrecognition moment, again manipulating the motif to suit its story, and endowing it again with a certain poignancy achieved not only by Clift's performance but by the extremely canted, noiresque framing. While George is suffering with his inferiority complex at the Eastmans' house, in breezes Angela Vickers in a glittering white ensemble, every inch the princess. Standing between his aunt and Angela, made tiny by perspective and by social standards he fails hopelessly, George gazes at the beautiful young woman but she does not see him at all. The misrecognition moment becomes one of non-recognition, of total non-seeing. Angela had previously driven past George and tootled her car horn merrily at him while he was hitchhiking but she does not do a double take here, gradually realising that the hunky young man in the black leather jacket is now transformed into a middle-class business man in tweeds, as the film could have set up, were it going the happy (and traditional female transformation) route. He is simply invisible to her.

The chief transformation trope the film employs is, perhaps, the idea of the false transformation. Again there are the negative overtones to the motif. Unlike the women of *Final Analysis* and *The Last Seduction* who pretend, via wardrobe changes, to adopt a new persona but really are undertaking a masquerade, George is not conscious that he is presenting a false exterior; the film condemns him not for wilfully projecting an untrue

persona, but for believing that clothes can change him at all. He does not seem to have a 'true self' which emerges when he puts on the right clothes; perhaps he earns the narrative's censure because his personality is so fluid he does not have a fixed identity at all. The amelioration motif also features in *A Place in the Sun*, and works particularly harshly; at the end of the film George's standard of elegance has descended back through the arc it rose through, back through the glamorous clothes he got to wear as Angela's boyfriend, past the casual work clothes in which he began the film, to conclude in a prison uniform, and with his trademark well-coiffed hair shaven down in a rough crop.

The film punishes George in the end, not only because he is interested in wearing the appropriate clothes for the right events and audiences, but because he also seems to hope that this, the female route to success, will transform his fortunes too. George has seemingly set his sights not on working hard to earn money (the male American dream) but by trying to dress appropriately, to *marry* it. George is thus doubly feminised and doubly condemned by the film.

Despite the severe treatment meted out to George Eastman, it is possible for Hollywood cinema to treat the male sartorial transformation without ultimately condemning their central men – as long as the film is a comedy. In *Come Blow Your Horn* (1963) the metamorphosis of Buddy Baker to a virtual clone of his older brother Alan (played by Frank Sinatra in full swinger mode) is not meant to censure the young man but to flatter the older one, the film's star. The wardrobe revolution is again accomplished during a musical interlude, when Alan takes Buddy through New York City to various shops to outfit him as a grown up, sexualised man; Alan sings the title song to his brother whilst outfitting him in almost identical clothes, and, most tellingly, gives his brother's transmutation the seal of approval by the pan up the youth's body so often found in the female-centred metamorphoses. This comic film then has no scruples about using the traditional alteration tropes, both visual and thematic, since Buddy's costume change alters his personality and makes him such a playboy that even his experienced brother is impressed. Alan's admiring regard here up the young man's body seems to have more to do with narcissism than any more potentially heterodox desire – perhaps explaining why Buddy's outfit resembles Alan's own so minutely.

While, then, Hollywood can use the transformation story and its common imagery and elements for a male star's vehicle, there are yet several points that disavow the more threatening aspects of implying masculine permeability along the lines traditionally accorded the female. In the Sinatra vehicle, he is clearly the star and he does not change; his younger sibling is the one transformed, and moulded overtly into the likeness of his sexually successful brother. The malleable personality is therefore a young man's, not a grown one's, and the film slyly links the alteration of Buddy's wardrobe with an equal and related alteration in his virginal status. Seemingly, a costume change is okay for men as long as it is undertaken to get the guy laid. This is not so different from the overt sexualisation undergone by the initially prudish wives in the early films; shopping helps Buddy, as it helped *Why Change Your Wife*'s Beth and *The Smiling Lieutenant*'s Anna: to become more alluring. The main difference is, of

Come Blow Your Horn: Doppelganger brothers

course, that the women were vixenising in order to attract just one man each, their husbands, and prevent them from straying further; Buddy's transformation turns him into the type of playboy portrayed by his screen brother Sinatra in many films throughout the Fifties where he is surrounded by, and sleeping with, multiple female partners.

Do these male transformations, while they use equivalent elements and images, tap similarly into the narrow range of foundation stories which seem to prompt the female metamorphosis? More research needs to be done to answer this question comprehensively, but *Come Blow Your Horn* perhaps suggests that the maturation theme, the inevitable caterpillar to butterfly notion, can work in male-directed films. (This is somehow preferable to viewing Sinatra's character as a Pygmalion who busily crafts a duplicate of his own image…) The woman can, at times, be allowed to be the agent of change, too, altering the male wardrobe and thus adopting a Pygmalion role. It must be noted, however, that such scenes are generally not dwelt upon in nearly as much detail as the corresponding moments in female-focused narratives. *Drive Me Crazy* (1999) has Nicole (Melissa Joan Hart) lead unwilling Chase (Adrian Grenier) into a store, suggest a few items and then convey her desires for his wardrobe by standing next to, and linking arms with, a store mannequin. A cut achieves the metamorphosis: Chase is now sporting the entire outfit. This is all we get of the shopping and invisible transformations: the film moves on to other things, with Chase now rendered potential boyfriend material. Similarly, Molly Brown (Kathy Bates) in *Titanic* (1997) can perhaps be viewed as a Fairy Godmother to Jack Dawson (Leonardo di Caprio), in that she lends him the evening wear he needs to eat dinner on the upper deck, but again her role is downplayed, her task very swiftly accomplished, and the outfit only a temporary one.

While much work remains to be conducted to compile a more complete picture of the male transformation in Hollywood films, it can be seen that some of the same tropes, both thematic and visual, are employed at times by the film-makers; though the male metamorphosis may be something of an anomaly, it is still dealt with in some of the same terms by Hollywood. Outside mainstream American cinema, however, in films from other corners of the globe, many other narratives are built around the transformation story and it would be a further interesting project to chart

and explore the methods by which other cinemas attempt to portray these tales, the points and motifs they have in common with the Hollywood treatments and the places they diverge.

The motif of the true self being released into the world by a change of frock, for example, is very evident in the 1992 Australian film, *Strictly Ballroom*. In this the young woman is a typical, almost parodic caterpillar who metamorphoses into a dazzling butterfly when she becomes confident through the attentions of the one she loves. Significantly, however, here the transformation, though brought about in entirely familiar terms – better clothes, more flattering hairstyle, the removal of glasses – is conducted without recourse to the Hollywood tropes we have been exploring here. The change is a gradual one, so there is no big reveal, no moment when the man looking past his partner is the surest sign that she has altered herself sufficiently to become his partner; no pan up her body, no slow-motion, no staging of significant moments on stairs.

Similarly, three recent films from different world cinemas have presented the transformation of the central female, but, while maintaining the frequent incident of the increased sexualisation of the woman through her metamorphosis, each chooses to depict this in a way unlike the Hollywood films. While *St Trinian's* (UK, 2007) presents the transformation of the new girl in the now customary music montage, it does not slow down but actually speeds up the segment to show the creation of several different looks in the course of one session. The wartime thriller *Black Book* (Netherlands/Germany/Belgium, 2006) presents its heroine's transformation as a necessary part of her membership of the resistance against the Nazis, and her hair dyeing and sexualised clothing thus speak of a masquerade undertaken for a noble cause, but there is again no 'big reveal'; even her hair colour transformation is staggered since first her head hair is revealed as dyed but later, the director, Paul Verhoeven, perhaps alluding to the most notorious moment of his own previous work in *Basic Instinct*, shows several shots of the dark-haired heroine bleaching her pubic hair to match… Finally, in Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution* (USA/China/Taiwan/Hong Kong) a young revolutionary girl is chosen to seduce and entrap an important Japanese collaborator, entailing a radical change of wardrobe for her in order to play her cover part of a bored and wealthy housewife. Although this does lead to sensuous shots of the girl pulling on silk

stockings, and her dressing in sumptuous fabrics, these are not shot in the customary aesthetic so often used by Hollywood, and in none of the three are slow-motion or panning camera work used to highlight the changes. The transformation story may thus be an international tale which can be drawn on for inspiration in many different forms, but within Hollywood cinema, as has been revealed, a number of distinctive tropes remain perennially in use whenever the metamorphosis narrative needs to be told. This tale of transfiguration through wardrobe seems to have saturated American media beyond just films, however; there are signs of the transformation everywhere, and these are, again, not just of recent inauguration. For example, in the late 1950s the Glad Toy Company invented a doll, the 'Poor Pitiful Pearl', who came in a box wearing a shabby tattered dress but also with a beautiful party gown to change into, in true Cinderella fashion.[3] While Pearl does not seem to be manufactured anymore, little boys and girls who want to rehearse the transformation story can always play with Barbie's Amazing Makeover book (she 'can't wait to go to the big gala tonight – but first she needs the perfect dress, the most glamorous make-up, and some sparkly jewellery! Pull the tabs, turn the wheel, and lift the flaps to help…').[4] Fifty-year-old Barbie may be looking remarkably good for her age, but for the rest of us, according to programmes like *Extreme Makeover* and *The Swan*, plastic surgery is now a realistic solution and not one to which only film stars have recourse. As Debra Gimlin reports in her consideration of various types of *Body Work* (2002), more and more women (and men) are now going beyond changing merely clothes, hair and makeup to include body re-sculpting, and thus undertaking risky and expensive medical procedures in order to bring about their own transformation.

In one of the seemingly inevitable twists of reference invoked whenever transformations are discussed, thinking about body work brings us back to film stars, perhaps the ultimate symbols of self-transformation which we behold not only every time we step into our multiplexes or turn on our televisions, but whenever we pick up one of our magazines dedicated to charting such stars' every wardrobe, hair, name, makeup and partner change. To mention one final film: a 1959 movie starring Shirley MacLaine, *Ask Any Girl*, acts as a kind of self-reflexive primer about film stardom. Through a series of narrative exigencies, our heroine, Meg

Wheeler (MacLaine) comes to work for a public relations firm (a very new and hip concept in 1959, judging by the pains the film takes to explain just what a PR company does). Wheeler finds herself falling for one of the two brothers who runs the firm, Evan (Gig Young), and decides to secure him for herself by conducting public relations research to discover what type of girl he would be likely to marry. She enlists the help of his older brother Miles (David Niven) in this project. His job is then to wine and dine, date and woo the contents of Evan's little black book and report back to Wheeler what Evan likes about them.

With her new knowledge of what her 'customer' desires in his ideal 'product', Meg makes herself over repeatedly and incrementally, changing her hair, her laugh, her way of dancing, her perfume, her style of jewellery. While the film's plot goes on to arrange itself in customary romantic comedy form so that Meg realises she loves Miles, the amount of time and energy devoted to the sequential metamorphoses in the film seem radically in excess of what is necessary. The impact granted these scenes, their almost uncanny lustre, seems to inhere in the similarity between what Meg is doing in order to win Evan, what starlets were doing every day to secure their places in a limited firmament of working actresses, and what, indeed, women in the audience were constantly being enjoined to do: change aspects of themselves in order to get what they want. *Ask Any Girl* does not bother with ideas about the 'true self' of Meg Wheeler; she views herself as a product which needs to meet its public's demand if it wants to be a successful part of the supply. This brings us in closing back to considering the notion of the 'Hollywood catwalk'. The Hollywood films continue to bring us stories we can use like customers at a fashion show: to tell us not only what to wear but how and when to wear them, and to underline that transcendent moments, such as when the model emerges into the spotlight at the top of the catwalk and pauses for a moment to receive gasps of admiration, can be ours too, as long as we keep on purchasing.

Although the three case studies helped to demonstrate that instructions on appropriate behaviour, appearance, desires and agency could never be unambivalently directed at a female audience, who might choose to valorise where they should supposedly be censuring, Hollywood has perpetually tried to issue them. It has also tried to insist the heroines' needs for perpetual improvements in appearance and etiquette are not

only ours too, but can be similarly met: through the judicious application of cash or credit, through the transformatory power of clothes that can bring out a new us, and the true us simultaneously.

I had hoped to end this book in considering just one more film, one just being released, adding the consideration of its sartorial transformation to the taxonomy in this book and seeing what tropes and elements it employed. Alas, at the time of finishing, it had not yet opened in the UK. But this is perhaps the message that ultimately underlines this book: there is *always* another film we have yet to see, another garment to buy, another transformation to make: another Hollywood catwalk.

notes

INTRODUCTION

1 The copy I viewed was in the British Film Institute; in March 2008 however, Flicker Alley released *Le papillon…* on disk 1 of its 5 DVD box set of Méliès' works, *Georges Méliès, First Wizard of Cinema 1896–1913*. See flickeralley.com (accessed 22 July 2008).
2 I should note that this is what the English subtitles say, not necessarily the French lines as spoken.

SECTION ONE: COSTUME AND FILM

1 While Turim puts this phrase in inverted commas, as a quotation, she does not offer specific sources. An example of Head's written support for the notion can be found in her article 'A Costume Problem: From Shop to Screen', published in *The Hollywood Quarterly* in 1946: Head sketches 'before' and 'after' versions of the same suit, the former selected by its purchaser without 'any attempt to bring out any characteristics in the wearer'. By contrast, the second sketch, it is implied, would bring out characteristics (unpaginated in the original).
2 Nor is this practice restricted to 1950s film or to Hollywood; in the modern Korean horror movie, *A Tale of Two Sisters* (2003), the costume code reveals what the narrative obfuscates and suspends: the revelation that one of the two sisters we see interacting on screen is actually dead.
3 See http://www.channel4.com/life/microsites/0-9/10yy/index.html (accessed 14 July 2008.)
4 'Significantly, there was no iconography of Pygmalion before the thirteenth century' (Stoichita: 21).
5 Written 1912, first performed in London 1914 with Mrs Patrick Campbell as Eliza.

6 'Eliza opens the door and is seen on the lighted landing in opera cloak, brilliant evening dress, and diamonds, with fan, flowers, and all accessories.' Stage direction, *Pygmalion*, Act IV.
7 Indy favourite Parker Posey in *Party Girl* struggles in the opposite direction – to be valued for her brains rather than her looks, thus the reversal of the usual transformation trajectory.

SECTION TWO: TROPES

1 Jordan's head-shaving scene is shown in the film's trailer, and her shaven head is also featured prominently.
2 Interestingly, however, such scenes are included in the source novel and were in an earlier draft of the screenplay (Ford and Mitchell: 15–17).
3 *Grease*'s choice of Sandra Dee as the ultimate good girl is problematic as she as often played 'bad girls', as in *A Summer Place* (1959), as the coy virgin. Even in *Gidget* (1959) where she is at her most perky, Dee enacts sexual desire for two different men, although the plot takes care that she is rescued before anything can actually happen. See Scheiner, 2001.
4 Bridget has been briefly shown to be adept at mirror writing; Wendy Kroy, the alias she chooses while in exile, is inspired by the place she misses most and wishes to return to: New York.
5 And not just in Hollywood: Alfred Hitchcock's early British film, *The Pleasure Garden* (1925) features in its first few minutes an instance of the look at the woman from the feet upwards which clearly signals male lust and inspires the woman's anger.
6 Ford and Mitchell have traced the camera movement which produces this look to the film's script and call it, after the scriptwriter, 'the Casey Robinson shot' (185)(cf 'The voyeuristic toe-to-top gaze' 15). Interestingly, they point out that the final version of the film does not use the shot at the moment it is indicated in the script but reserves it for later (15; 17).
7 See for example *Now Voyager*, *Moonstruck*, *She's All That*, *Miss Congeniality*, *The Princess Diaries* ('We'll call this one Frida and this one Kahlo…') *Last Holiday*…

SECTION THREE: CASE STUDIES

1 Of her fifty roles up to and including 1939's *The Women*, in which she played a shopgirl scheming to trap a wealthy husband, Crawford assayed the wealthy socialite role 12 times, a working girl 13 times and a showgirl 10 times, as well as 14 more generic 'love interest' or lead female roles. Combining the working

and showgirl portrayals (since showgirls are workers too) gives a total of 23, which indicates the reasons why Crawford has such a strong association with shop and office girl characters.

2 See Joan Crawford file, Herrick library. Biography is undated but seems to post-date the star's divorce from Philip Terry in 1946.

3 27 March 1925.

4 Egs: 'A white cap and dress similar to those worn by Joan Crawford in "Letty Lynton" are being worn by many women in the Los Angeles area', *Hollywood Star*, 12 (25), July 1932: 18; 'Each of Crawford's films leaves its mark on fashions', *MGM Studio News*, 2 (13) 24 September 1935, no pagination.

5 See the hardback copy of *Movie Crazy*; the photographs are numbers 10 and 11 in the photo section between pages 122 and 123.

6 See Colman, *Silver Screen* November 1932: 26. A picture of the star has the caption: 'Joan Crawford started a fad when she painted Sadie Thompson's lips so heavily. Now everyone's doing it.'

7 See, for example, a dress in Sears Fall/Winter 1951, described thus: 'Bodice of Alencon-type lace studded with sparkling rhinestones, American beauty rose and a separate net stole. The skirt is two layers of net of rayon taffeta. $15.98' or a similar one for Spring/Summer 1952, an 'Eyelet Embroidered Batiste with becoming draped bodice. $10.98'. Both in Smith, 1998: 9 and 17.

8 The date of the Battle of Little Big Horn, at which Custer died, is one of the few precise dates alluded to in the film.

9 See Premiere.com, 'Parade of Prada', 30 June 2006, which calls the film a 'sartorial supersatire'. Web-link: http://www.premiere.com/Feature/Parade-of-Prada accessed 2 July 2009.

10 My sincere thanks to Alisia Chase for referring me to this provocative article.

11 See http://www.payless.com/PatriciaField/

12 See Thompson, 2006; Field, 2006.

13 A loose count found 64 pages with multiple clothing references, topped only by pages that had multiple citations of designer and brand names – 90 out of a total 391.

14 Hathaway, interviewed in featurette 'NYC and Fashion' on *The Devil Wears Prada* DVD.

15 NBC News Transcripts, 27 June 2006 Tuesday.

16 'The same pair of jeans I'd been wearing every day for the past few weeks lay rumpled in a ball near my closet: when I pulled them over my hips, I noticed they were feeling snugger … my body had adjusted itself … and gained back the ten pounds I'd lost. And it didn't even make me cringe …' Weisberger 2003: 374.

17 Interestingly, a *New York Times* article about Vince notes not only its local provenance but its recent foundation: Brenda Weber's argument receives an

unexpected fillip here, as the company was formed after, and as a direct response to, the September 11 terrorist attacks. See http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/12/business/smallbusiness/12vince.html?_r=1&ex=1158206400&en=ea74b3db2f0126be&ei=5087%0A)

CONCLUSION

1 'Isabel' wants to cut her long hair short and finds after the event that 'People definitely think I look more sophisticated with short hair. One coworker even commented that I acted like Anne Hathaway in *The Devil Wears Prada* after her transformation from drab to fashionable. I certainly have been walking around with that same sort of energy' (Litke: 117).
2 'Hairstylists and makeup artists often take on the role of fairy godmother…' (Litke: 118).
3 See http://www.dollinfo.com/pitifulpearl.htm
4 *Barbie: Amazing Makeover*, by Mary Man-Kong, 2006.

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